A LEGEND OF MONTROSE

BY

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ABRIDGED AND SIMPLIFIED BY

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WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND IMPRESSION

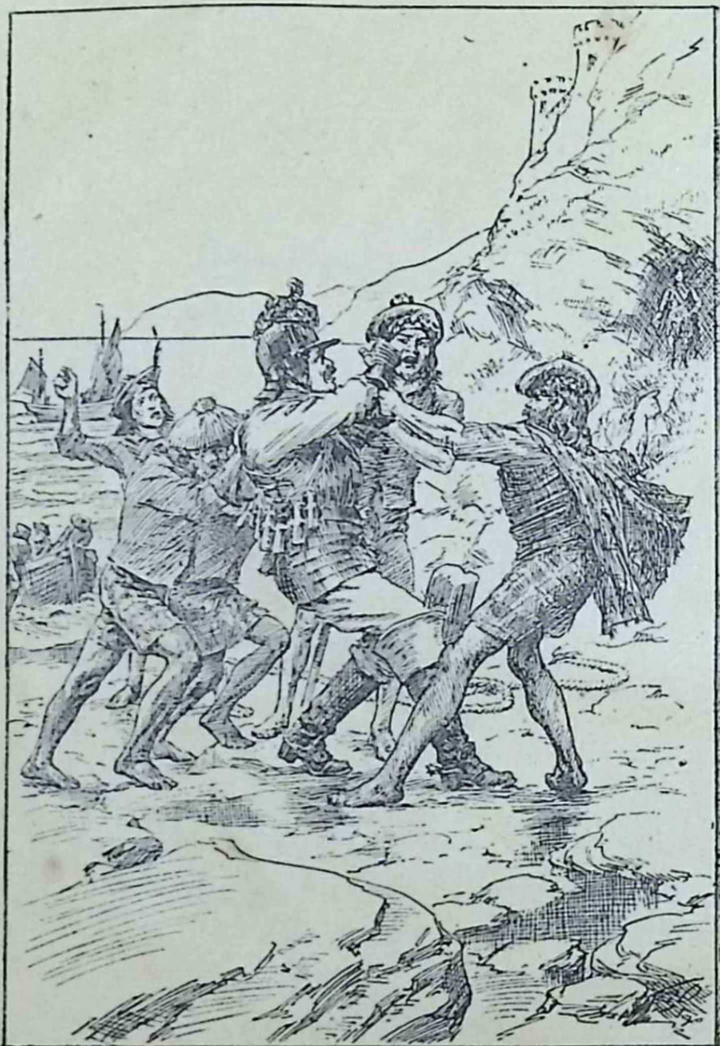
HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO, MELBOURNE

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, MADRAS

1923



CAPTAIN DALGETTY AT ARDENVOHR

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A LEGEND OF MONTROSE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

OUR tale has its commencement during the great Civil War that agitated Britain in the seventeenth century. Scotland had as yet remained free from the ravages of war within its borders, although its inhabitants were much divided in political opinions. Many of them disapproved of the bold measure that the Scotch Parliament had adopted by sending into England a large army to help the English Parliament, and were determined to declare for the King at the earliest opportunity. They hoped to compel their Parliament to recall the Scotch army from England, and to recover a great part of Scotland for the King.

This plan was mainly adopted by the northern nobles and by many of the chiefs of the Highland clans, who expected to increase their authority by supporting the King, and who were in that half savage state in which war is always more welcome than peace.

Great commotions were generally expected from these causes. The Scotch Highlanders had always been accustomed to raid and plunder the Lowlands: these raids now began to be more regular as part of a general system of attack.

Those at the head of affairs were aware of the peril of the moment, and anxiously prepared to meet it. They considered, however, with satisfaction, that no important

leader had yet appeared to assemble an army of Royalists, or even to direct the efforts of the Highland raiders. They hoped that, by placing troops in the Lowlands near the Highland border, they would restrain the mountain chiefs: while the power of various barons in the north, who supported the Parliament, might check the Royalist nobles.

In the West Highlands the Parliament numbered many enemies; but their power was supposed to be broken by the great influence of the Marquis of Argyle, in whom the Parliament had the utmost confidence. It was indeed well known that Argyle was a man better suited to manage political schemes than to control the hostile mountain tribes by personal courage; but, on the other hand, his clan was numerous and was led by gallant gentlemen. Argyle's clan had already humbled severely many of the neighbouring tribes, who were not likely to challenge his power again.

Thus the Parliament had at their command the whole west and south of Scotland, the richest part of the kingdom. They therefore did not think the danger sufficient for them to recall the army of twenty thousand men, by the help of which the English Parliament had checked the King's career of triumph.

The Scotch Parliament was moved to take such an active interest in the civil war of England for the following reasons.

Peace had been made between King Charles and his subjects of Scotland, but the Scottish rulers were well aware that the King had been forced to agree to this peace by the influence of the English Parliament, and by the terror of the Scotch arms. They suspected that, as soon as opportunity offered, the King would withdraw the honours and rewards he had unwillingly granted to the leaders of the party that had shown itself most hostile to his interests. The weakness of the English Parliament was seen in Scotland with deep alarm: it was concluded that if Charles

triumphed by force of arms against his rebellious subjects in England, he would not be long in taking vengeance on the Scotch who had set the example of taking up arms against him.

Further, the nature and condition of the Scotch army made an expedition into England popular. The army was headed by a poor and discontented nobility; its officers were chiefly Scottish soldiers of fortune who had served in the German wars under any master who paid them well. During the last invasion of England they had enjoyed good pay and free quarters, and they were anxious to renew so profitable an experience.

The Scotch army met with success when it entered England; with the forces of the English Parliament it besieged York, and fought a desperate action in which the Royalist troops were defeated. But the absence of their troops in England considerably weakened the power of the Parliament in Scotland, and gave rise to the agitations among its opponents that have been mentioned above.

CHAPTER II

DUGALD DALGETTY

It was towards the close of a summer's evening during this anxious period, that a young gentleman of quality, well mounted and armed, and accompanied by two servants, rode slowly up a steep pass leading to the Highlands from the Lowlands of Perth. Their course had lain for some time along the banks of a lake, the deep waters of which reflected the crimson beams of the western sun. The broken path that they followed with some difficulty, was in places shaded by ancient trees and overhung by fragments of huge rock. Elsewhere the hill, which formed the northern side of this beautiful sheet of water, arose less steeply, and was covered with heath of the darkest purple.

It was a scene full of charms, but the travellers were too occupied with the perils of their journey to pay much attention to the beauty of the scenery.

The master kept abreast of his servants, so far as possible, and seemed to converse with them earnestly: the intentions of the leading men who inhabited this wild country, and whether they were likely to support the King or the Parliament, were the subjects of their conversation.

They had not advanced more than half-way up the lake, when they discovered a single horseman coming down the shore, as if to meet them. The travellers saw that he wore armour, and determined to question him. 'We must know who he is,' said the young gentleman, 'and whither he is going.' And, putting spurs to his horse, he rode forward, followed by his two attendants.

The single horseman advanced slowly, so that each party had an opportunity to take a full survey of the other.

The stranger was mounted on a strong horse, fit for the great weight he had to carry, and his rider occupied his saddle with an air that showed it was his familiar seat. He had a bright head-piece with a plume of feathers, a thick steel breast-plate and a back-piece of lighter material. Beneath his armour he wore a leather coat, and on his hands a pair of steel gloves, the tops of which reached up to his elbows. On one side he carried a long sword, and on the other a dagger; at his back hung a musket. His huge boots, reaching to his thighs, completed the outfit of a well-armed trooper of the period.

The horseman himself was above the middle size, and strong enough to bear with ease the weight of his weapons. His age was about forty, and his face was that of a weather-beaten veteran, who had seen many fields, and brought away more than one scar.

At the distance of about thirty yards he halted, raised himself in his stirrups, and brought his musket under his right arm, ready for use if occasion required.

The leader of the party that faced him was well mounted and clad in a leather coat, richly embroidered; but his servants had only coarse jackets. None of them had any weapons except swords and pistols, without which gentlemen or their attendants, during those disturbed times, seldom stirred abroad.

When they had stood gazing at one another for about a minute, the younger gentleman gave the challenge, 'For whom are you?'

'Tell me first,' answered the soldier, 'for whom are you? The strongest party should speak first.'

'We are for King Charles,' answered the first speaker. 'Now tell us your party.'

'I am for my standard,' answered the single horseman.

'And for which standard?' replied the chief of the other party. 'King or Parliament?'

'In truth, sir,' answered the soldier, 'my mind is not yet decided upon that point.'

'Surely,' answered the other, 'no gentleman or man of honour can be long in choosing his party.'

'Truly, sir,' replied the trooper, 'if by your words you mean to attack my honour I shall be glad to take up the quarrel with my single person against you three. But if you mean that no man of sense can delay choosing one side or the other, I am ready to prove you wrong. In my youth I studied at college, and later I followed the wars under the banner of the invincible Gustavus, king of Sweden, the Lion of the North, and under many other heroic leaders. So, sir, I am able to argue this point with you.'

The younger gentleman replied, 'I should be glad, sir, to have some conversation with you upon so interesting a question, and I shall be proud if I can persuade you to favour the cause I have myself joined. I ride this evening to a friend's house not three miles distant; if you will accompany me, you shall have good quarters

for the night, and free permission to take your own road in the morning, if you do not then wish to join us.'

'Whose word am I to take for this?' answered the cautious soldier. 'Tell me your name; for all I know, you may intend to entrap me.'

'I am called,' answered the young stranger, 'the Earl of Menteith, and I pledge my honour that no harm will be done you.'

'A worthy nobleman,' answered the soldier, 'whose word is not to be doubted.' He replaced his musket on his back, and gave a military salute to the young nobleman. 'For my part,' he continued, 'I promise to be a good comrade to your lordship in peace or in peril, while we are together.'

'Sir,' said Lord Menteith, 'I highly value your company, but I trust we shall have no occasion for any exercise of valour, as I expect to conduct you to friendly quarters.'

'Good quarters, my lord,' replied the soldier, 'are always acceptable. And truly your noble offer is the more welcome, as I did not precisely know where I and my poor companion' (patting his horse) 'were to find lodgings to-night.'

'May I ask,' said Lord Menteith, 'whom I have the good fortune to assist?'

'My lord,' said the trooper, 'my name is Captain Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, at your honourable service to command. My father, my lord, was unthrifty and wasted his money; so the best I could do, when I was eighteen years old, was to carry the learning I had gained at college, my gentle blood, together with my stalwart arms and legs, to the German wars, and there push my way as a soldier of fortune. My lord, my legs and arms served me better than either my gentle birth or my book-learning, and I soon found myself a private soldier in a regiment of Scotch, where I was taught the rules of service so strictly that I shall not forget them in a hurry.'

'And doubtless, sir,' replied Lord Menteith, 'you have gone through some hot service.'

'Indeed, my lord, I have seen great battles, and know something about sieges, attacks, and sallies.'

'And your merit, sir, and experience were no doubt followed by promotion ?'

'It came slowly, my lord, very slowly,' replied Dalgetty. 'After many years' service I rose to be lieutenant and captain under that invincible monarch, the Lion of the North, terror of Austria, pride of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus.'

'And yet, if I understand you, Captain Dalgetty, you left the service of this great prince.'

'It was after his death, sir,' said Dalgetty ; 'moreover, there were things, my lord, in that service offensive to a soldier. In particular, although the pay was not high, the invincible Gustavus never paid more than a third of it.'

'I begin now to wonder, sir,' said Lord Menteith, 'that you continued so long in the Swedish service.'

'Why, sir,' answered the captain, 'that great leader, the Lion of the North, had a way of winning battles, taking towns, overrunning countries, and exacting tribute, that made his service very pleasant to all true-bred soldiers. My lord, I have myself occupied a palace, drunk choice wines with my comrades, and called in contributions. But all this glory hastened to decay after the death of our great master. So, finding that fortune had changed sides, I gave up my commission and took service in an Irish regiment under the Austrians.'

'And may I ask,' said Lord Menteith, interested in the adventures of this soldier of fortune, 'how you liked this change of masters ?'

'Not ill, not well,' said the captain. 'The Emperor of Austria did not pay much better than the great Gustavus. We had plenty of hard knocks, and I was often obliged to run my head against my old Swedish friends. However,

in spite of heavy blows and light pay, a soldier of fortune may thrive in the Austrian service, for his private actions are not so closely watched as by the Swedish. If an officer did his duty on the field, his commander paid no heed to complaints from peasants or townsmen that they had been plundered. So an experienced soldier could get out of the country the pay he could not obtain from the Emperor.'

'And pray, sir,' said Lord Menteith, 'what made you leave so profitable a service ?'

'Why, sir,' answered the soldier, 'I had a dispute upon a point of honour with the major of our regiment, an Irishman. And, as it pleased our colonel, who was also Irish, to give the lighter punishment to his countryman, and the heavier to me, I exchanged my commission for one under the Spaniards.'

'I hope you found yourself better off by the change,' said Lord Menteith.

'In truth, sir,' answered the captain, 'I had little to complain of. The quarters were excellent, and the bread and wine good. There was no service, and little duty. It was a fine resting-place for a soldier somewhat weary of battles and sieges, who had bought with his blood as much honour as he needed, and desired a little ease and good-living.'

'And why, captain, did you retire from the Spanish service also ?'

'My lord,' replied Captain Dalgetty, 'the Spaniard is a most conceited person, and does not pay proper respect to foreign soldiers of valour who consent to take service with him. It is galling to an honourable soldier to be obliged to give place to every swollen-headed Spaniard, who, on an occasion of danger, would willingly make way for him.'

'So you again changed your service ?'

'I did, my lord; and, after trying for a short while

two or three other powers, I even took on for a time with Holland.'

'And how did their service suit you ?'

'Oh, my lord,' exclaimed the soldier, 'their behaviour on pay-day is a pattern to all Europe : everything is paid in full and to date. The quarters, too, are excellent. But then, sir, they are a scrupulous people, and will make no allowances if a peasant complains of a broken head, or a wine-seller of a broken jug ; a soldier of honour is dragged before the town-council, who threaten him with degrading punishment. So I resolved to leave the service of the Dutch, and, as I heard that I was likely to find employment for my arms this summer in my dear native land, I have come here to give my loving country the advantage of the experience I have acquired in foreign parts. Your lordship, I have now given you an outline of my brief story.'

The road presently led the travellers into an upland valley, where they continued their journey along the green banks of a mountain stream.

Lord Menteith resumed his conversation with Captain Dalgetty. 'Surely,' said he, 'a soldier of honour like yourself will not hesitate to support the cause of King Charles rather than that of the low-born knaves who are in rebellion against his authority ?'

'You speak reasonably, my lord,' answered Dalgetty ; 'but I judge, from what I have heard since I came into these parts, that a soldier of honour is free to take whichever part in the quarrel he finds most convenient to himself. "Loyalty" is your pass-word, my lord. "Liberty" roars another. "The King" is one war-cry, "The Parliament" another. Good watchwords all ; but which is the better cause I cannot say.'

'And pray, Captain Dalgetty,' said his lordship, 'how will you make up your mind ?'

'Simply upon two points, my lord,' answered the soldier. 'First, on which side will my services be in more honourable

request ? secondly, by which party are they most likely to be gratefully rewarded ? And, to speak plainly, my lord, my opinion at present on both points inclines to the side of the Parliament.'

'Give me your reasons,' said Lord Menteith, 'and perhaps I shall be able to meet them with others more powerful.'

'Well, then, my lord,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'a Highland host is expected to assemble in these wild hills on the King's behalf. Now, our Highlanders are strong and brave, but their way of fighting is a wild one, remote from the practices and discipline of war. If I undertook to train such a mob, I should not be understood; and, if I was understood, what chance should I have of being obeyed among a band of half savages who are accustomed to respect and obey only their own lords and chiefs ? '

'I believe, Anderson,' said Lord Menteith, looking back at one of his servants, 'we shall need experienced officers. When we are joined by the Irish infantry, who must have landed by now in the West Highlands, we shall want good soldiers to train our troops.'

'And I should like very well to be employed in such service,' said Dalgetty. 'The Irish are fine fellows; I desire to see none better in the field.'

'If you are willing to join the royal cause,' said Menteith, 'I can promise you a command of Irish.'

'And yet,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'my second and greatest difficulty remains ; for, although I will maintain with my sword that honour is to be put before pay, yet a wise soldier should consider what pay he is to receive. And truly, my lord, from what I hear, the Parliament holds the purse.'

The servant, Anderson, now respectfully addressed his master. 'I think, my lord,' he said, 'I could, with your permission, say something to remove Captain Dalgetty's second objection. To my mind, resources are as open

to our side as to the other. The Parliament taxes the country according to its pleasure, and preys on the estates of the King's friends ; now, if we once enter the Lowlands, with our Highlanders and our Irish at our backs, and our swords in our hands, we can find many a fat traitor whose ill-won wealth shall fill our chest and satisfy our soldiers. Besides, many estates will be forfeited to us. In short, whoever joins these rebellious dogs may get some miserable pay : whoever joins our standard has a chance to be knight, lord, or earl, if luck serves him.'

'I confess,' said Dalgetty to Lord Menteith, 'your lordship has a sensible servant. I will consider the matter.'

'Do so, captain,' said Lord Menteith ; 'you will have the night in which to think of it, for we are now near the house where I hope to ensure you a welcome.'

'That, my lord,' said the captain, 'is good news, for I have tasted no food since daybreak except a scrap of bread, which I divided with my horse. I have been forced to draw my sword-belt tighter for very hunger.'

CHAPTER III

THE HOME OF THE M'AULAYS

A HILL was now before the travellers, covered with an ancient forest, which gleamed red in the setting sun. In the centre of this wood rose the towers of the castle destined for the end of their journey.

As the travellers approached, they saw that the defences of the place had recently been strengthened against the dangers of those troublesome times. Different parts of the building and of its surrounding wall were pierced to shelter musketry ; the windows had been carefully secured by iron bars ; the door of the courtyard was shut ; and it was only after cautious challenge that it was opened by two strong Highland servants, both under arms.

The travellers found additional preparations for defence within the courtyard. Platforms had been raised against the walls for the use of firearms, and one or two small guns were mounted on their summits.

More servants instantly rushed from the castle, some hastening to take the horses of the strangers, while others waited to conduct the visitors to the house. But Captain Dalgetty refused to be parted from his horse. ‘It is my custom, my friends, to see Gustavus lodged myself; we are old friends and fellow-travellers, and, as I often need the use of his legs, I always lend him my tongue to call for whatever he wants.’ So saying, he strode into the stable after his horse.

Lord Menteith and his attendants, leaving their horses to the care of the servants of the place, walked forward into the house. They entered a low-arched stone hall, the common meeting-place of a Highland family. A large fire in the huge chimney at the upper end shed a dim light through the apartment. Shields, daggers, plaids, guns, bows, axes, and coats of armour hung in confusion on the walls.

In the centre of the room was a large clumsy table, which a servant immediately spread at the upper end with milk, butter, cheese, and wine, for the refreshment of Lord Menteith; while another servant made similar preparations at the bottom of the table for his attendants.

Meanwhile the guests stood by the fire; the young nobleman under the chimney, and his servants at a little distance. ‘What do you think, Anderson,’ said the former, ‘of our fellow-traveller?’

‘A stout fellow,’ replied Anderson; ‘and I wish we had twenty like him, to train our troops.’

‘I differ from you, Anderson,’ said Lord Menteith: ‘I think this fellow Dalgetty has sharpened his appetite for blood in foreign lands, and has now returned to suck his own country's veins. Shame on the pack of these

hired swordsmen! They have given the Scots through all Europe the name of mean hirelings, who know no principle but their month's pay, and transfer from standard to standard, at the pleasure of the highest bidder. I could scarcely keep patience with the captain, and yet could hardly help laughing at his impudence.'

'Your lordship,' said Anderson, 'I beg you to conceal your generous indignation. We cannot, unfortunately, do our work without the help of those who act on baser motives than our own. But stop; we shall be overheard.'

From a side-door a Highlander glided into the hall. His great height and complete equipment, as well as the eagle's feather in his bonnet, showed him to be a person of superior rank. As he walked slowly up to the table, Lord Menteith addressed him, asking, 'Allan, how are you?' But the Highlander made no answer.

'Do not speak to him now,' whispered an old servant, who was standing near Menteith.

The tall Highlander, sitting down upon an empty bench next the fire, fixed his eyes upon the glowing logs and seemed buried in profound thought. His dark eyes and wild features bore the air of one who meditates deeply, paying little attention to what happens around him. Perhaps his mind was overclouded with the peculiar fancies and superstitions that were common among Highlanders of that time.

'Your lordship,' said the Highland servant, sidling up to Lord Menteith, and speaking low, 'must not speak to Allan now, for the cloud is upon his mind.'

Lord Menteith nodded, and took no further notice of the reserved mountaineer.

'Did I not say,' asked the latter, suddenly raising his stately person upright, and looking at the servant, 'that four were to come? and here are only three!'

'In truth you said so, Allan,' said the old Highlander, 'and here's the fourth man coming, clinking his armour.

Am I to set his chair up near Menteith's, or down with the honest gentlemen at the foot of the table ?'

Lord Menteith himself answered, by pointing to a seat beside his own.

'Here he is,' said Donald, as Captain Dalgetty entered the hall ; 'and I hope you gentlemen will all take bread and cheese until the master comes back from the hill with the southern gentlefolk, and then the cook will prepare the game they bring.'

Meantime, Captain Dalgetty had walked up to the seat placed next Lord Menteith, and was leaning on the back of it, while Anderson and his companion waited respectfully at the bottom of the table. Three or four Highlanders ran hither and thither to bring food.

Suddenly Allan started up, and, snatching a lamp from the hand of an attendant, held it close to Dalgetty's face while he gazed keenly at his features.

'By my honour,' said Dalgetty, half displeased, 'I wager that lad and I will know each other when we meet again.'

Allan next strode to the bottom of the table, and looked attentively at Anderson and his companion. He then seized Anderson by the arm, and, dragging him to the vacant seat at the upper end, signed to him to seat himself there. He then hurried the captain to the bottom of the table.

The captain, angry at this freedom, tried violently to shake Allan from him ; but, powerful as he was, he was inferior to the gigantic mountaineer, who threw him off with such force that, after reeling a few paces, he fell at full length. When he arose, he at once drew his sword and flew at Allan, who folded his arms and awaited the attack with scornful indifference.

Lord Menteith and his attendants at once interposed to preserve peace.

'He is mad,' whispered Menteith ; 'there is no purpose in quarrelling with him.'

'If your lordship is sure that he is out of his senses,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'the matter must end here. It is a pity he should be so weak in mind, when he is so strong in body.'

Peace was thus restored, and the party seated themselves, while Allan returned to his place by the fire.

'Then, Donald,' said Lord Menteith to the old servant, 'the chief is hunting on the hill?'

'He is, your honour, and with him are two English nobles, Sir Miles Musgrave and Sir Christopher Hall.'

'Hall and Musgrave?' said Lord Menteith, looking at his attendants, 'the very men that we wished to see.'

After the meal Lord Menteith and the Captain were led by old Donald into a side-room, where they were presently joined by the lord of the castle, Angus M'Aulay, and his English guests, Sir Christopher Hall and Sir Miles Musgrave, who explained to Menteith that, as the royalist plans in the north of England had failed, they had come to join in the Scotch campaign. Great joy was expressed by all at the meeting, and Lord Menteith introduced Captain Dalgetty to the chief, who made him welcome.

While they were talking, Donald entered and announced that dinner was ready.

During the meal Dalgetty displayed an enormous appetite: he ate steadily and spoke to no one, until the food was removed from the table.

'It is the duty of every commander of a fortress,' he explained to the company, 'to secure, whenever possible, as much ammunition and food as his stores can hold; for he does not know when he may be besieged. In the same way, gentlemen, when a soldier finds that food is good and plentiful he is, in my opinion, wise to provision himself for at least three days, as there is no knowing when he may come by another meal.'

When the servants had withdrawn, the conversation began to turn upon the state of the country; and Lord

Menteith inquired anxiously what clans were expected to join the proposed assembly of the King's friends.

'That depends much, my lord, on the person who lifts the banner,' said Angus M'Aulay; 'for you know we Highlanders, when a few clans are assembled, are not easily commanded by one of our own chiefs, or, indeed, by anybody. We have heard a rumour, indeed, that Alaster M'Donald has come over with some troops from Ireland, and has landed in the Western Highlands.'

'Will not M'Donald suit you for a leader, then?' said Lord Menteith.

'M'Donald!' said Allan M'Aulay scornfully. 'There lives but one man whom we will follow, and that is Montrose.'

'But Montrose, sir,' said Sir Christopher Hall, 'has not been heard of since our failure in the north of England. It is thought he has returned to the King at Oxford for further instructions.'

'Returned!' said Allan, with a scornful laugh. 'I could tell you, but it is not worth my while: you will know soon enough.'

'By my honour, Allan,' said Lord Menteith, 'you will weary your friends with this intolerable sullen humour. But I know the reason,' he added, laughing: 'you have not seen Annot Lyle to-day.'

'Whom did you say I had not seen?' said Allan sternly.

'Annot Lyle, the little queen of song,' said Lord Menteith.

'I wish I might never see her again,' said Allan, sighing, 'if that would prevent your seeing her.'

'Why, pray?' said Lord Menteith carelessly.

'Because,' said Allan, 'it is written on your forehead that you and she are to be the ruin of each other.' So saying, he rose up and left the room.

Lord Menteith turned to Angus M'Aulay. 'Has Allan been long like this?' he asked.

'About three days,' answered Angus. 'The fit is almost

over; he will be better to-morrow. But come, gentlemen, fill your glasses. The King's health! King Charles's health!'

The health was quickly drunk, and was followed by others; but, as Lord Menteith was fatigued, the party broke up early.

CHAPTER IV

ALLAN'S HISTORY

Angus M'Aulay conducted his visitors to a room in which there were four beds, and, taking Lord Menteith a little apart, said to him: 'I did not like you to sleep alone in the room with that soldier of fortune, so I had your servants' beds placed here also. These are times, my lord, when men go to bed with sound throats which may be slit before next morning.'

Lord Menteith thanked him. 'I do not fear violence from Captain Dalgetty,' he said, 'but I always like to have Anderson near me; he is of better birth than an ordinary servant.'

'I have not seen this Anderson,' said M'Aulay; 'did you hire him in England?'

'I did,' said Lord Menteith; 'you will see the man to-morrow. Meantime I wish you good-night.'

His host then left the apartment, which Lord Menteith's two attendants entered almost immediately.

Captain Dalgetty began to take off his armour, and, finding some of the clasps difficult to undo, he asked Anderson to help him.

'Undo his armour, Sibbald,' said Anderson to the other servant.

'By heavens!' exclaimed the Captain, turning round in great astonishment, 'here's a common fellow thinks himself too good to serve Captain Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, who has served half the princes of Europe!'

'Captain Dalgetty,' said Lord Menteith, 'please understand that Anderson waits upon no one but myself; but I will help Sibbald to undo your armour with much pleasure.'

'Too much trouble for you, my lord,' said Dalgetty.

When he had at last rid himself of his armour, the Captain stood before the fire, thinking over the events of the day. The character of Allan M'Aulay seemed chiefly to interest him. 'So fine a man, and yet a madman,' he said to Lord Menteith, shaking his head.

'If you care to hear a long story,' said Lord Menteith, 'at this time of night, I can tell you how the circumstances of Allan's birth account for his singular character.'

'A long story, my lord,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'is a good preface to a sound sleep. And, since your lordship is pleased to take the trouble to tell it, I shall be glad to listen.'

'Anderson,' said Lord Menteith, 'and you, Sibbald, are dying to hear, I suppose, of this strange man too; my tale will teach you how to behave to him in time of need. You had better step to the fire.'

Having thus assembled an audience, Lord Menteith sat down on the edge of his bed, while Captain Dalgetty rolled himself on to his own couch, and, thrusting his shaggy head from between the blankets, listened to Lord Menteith's story in a most comfortable state, half asleep and half awake.

'The father,' said Lord Menteith, 'of Angus and Allan M'Aulay was the chief of a small but respected Highland clan. His wife's brother obtained from the Scotch King the post of warden in a royal forest near to his castle: in defending his forest rights, he was unfortunately involved in a quarrel with some Highland robbers. This robber-clan was called the Children of the Mist, because they had no fixed homes, but wandered incessantly among the mountains and valleys. They are a fierce and hardy people, with wild and vengeful passions. A party of them sur-

prised the warden while he was hunting alone, and slew him. They cut off his head and proceeded to M'Aulay's castle. M'Aulay was absent, and his wife had reluctantly to receive the Children of the Mist. Refreshments were placed before them, and, when the lady left the room, they placed the head of their victim on the table. When the mistress of the castle returned and saw her brother's head, she fled like an arrow out of the house into the woods, uttering shriek upon shriek. After the ruffians had withdrawn, the terrified servants sought their unfortunate mistress in every direction ; but she was nowhere to be found. It was thought that, in her terror, she had flung herself into the river.—But I tire you, Captain Dalgetty, and you seem inclined to sleep.'

'By no means,' answered the soldier. 'I am not sleepy ; but I always hear best with my eyes shut. It is a habit I learned when I stood sentinel.'

The young nobleman continued his tale, addressing himself chiefly to his servants, without minding the slumbering Captain.

'Every baron in the country,' said he, 'now swore revenge for this dreadful crime. They took arms with the relations of the murdered person, and the Children of the Mist were hunted down without mercy. Seventeen of their heads fed the crows upon the gates of the avengers' castles. The survivors retreated to more distant wildernesses.'

Lord Menteith paused a moment, but presently continued.

'One day in summer, the maids of the M'Aulay family were milking the cows in the upland pastures, when they perceived with terror that they were being watched at a distance by a pale, thin figure resembling their former mistress. They took the form for the lady's ghost, but some of them boldly approached it. At once it fled from them into the woods with a wild shriek.

'When the husband heard of this, he came to the place,

and managed to catch the unhappy fugitive, whose mind, however, proved to be totally deranged.

'After some time the unfortunate lady gave birth to a boy, an infant of uncommon health and strength. This was Allan: his brother Angus had been born two years before. After Allan's birth, his unhappy mother recovered her reason to a great extent, but never her health and spirits. Allan was her only joy. She kept him always with her, and must have impressed many superstitious ideas upon his young mind. She died when he was about ten. Her last words were spoken to him in private, and bade him take vengeance upon the Children of the Mist.

'From this moment Allan M'Aulay's habits were totally changed. He had hitherto been his mother's constant companion, listening to her dreams and feeding his imagination with all the wild and terrible superstitions of the mountaineers. He had a timid, startled look, loved to seek out solitary places in the wood, and was terrified by the approach of children of the same age. But, after his mother's death, his manners at once changed. He remained thoughtful and serious, and indulged in long fits of silence; but at other times he joined in their exercises with the young men of the clan, and, from his extraordinary strength, soon excelled them all. But I speak to regardless ears,' said Lord Menteith, interrupting himself, for the Captain was now snoring unmistakably.

'The ears of that snorting pig, my lord,' said Anderson, 'are indeed shut to what you say; nevertheless, I hope you will have the goodness to proceed. The history of this poor young fellow has a deep and wild interest in it.'

'When Allan had reached his fifteenth year,' said Lord Menteith, 'he behaved so independently, and was so impatient of control, that his father was much alarmed. He was absent in the woods for whole days and nights, under pretence of hunting. His father was the more anxious because several of the Children of the Mist had ventured



ALLAN M'AULAY AT HIS MOTHER'S DEATH-BED

back to their old haunts, and would probably injure Allan if they met him.

'I was myself upon a visit to the castle when this matter was brought to a crisis. Allan had been absent since daybreak in the woods; it was a dark, stormy night, and he did not return. While we were sitting at the supper-table, Allan suddenly entered the room with a firm and confident air. His father remarked that I had killed game and had returned before sunset, while he supposed Allan, who had been on the hill till midnight, had returned with empty hands. "Are you sure of that?" said Allan fiercely, "here is something that will tell you another tale." And, undoing his plaid, he rolled down on the table a human head, bloody and newly severed, saying at the same time, "Lie where the head of a better man lay before you." His father and others present recognized the head as that of Hector of the Mist, a strong and ferocious outlaw, who had been active in the murder of Allan's uncle, but had hitherto escaped vengeance.

'We were all struck with surprise, but Allan refused to give us any information. We guessed, however, he had overcome the outlaw after a desperate struggle, because he had been severely wounded.

'All measures were now taken to protect Allan from the vengeance of the robbers; but neither his wounds nor his father's orders, nor even the locking the doors of his room, could prevent him from seeking out his enemies. He escaped from the castle by night, and later returned with three more heads of the Children of the Mist.

'At length these fierce men became appalled by Allan's ferocity and daring: they were convinced that he bore a charmed life, and that no weapon could take effect upon him. After a time five or six of the stoutest robbers in the Highlands would have fled at the blast of Allan's horn.

'Meanwhile, however, the Children of the Mist continued to do the M'Aulays and their friends as much harm as they

could. This led to another expedition against the tribe, in which I shared. We surprised them and made clean work, burning and slaying all before us.

'In this terrible kind of war even the females and the helpless do not always escape. One little maiden alone, who smiled at Allan's drawn dagger, escaped his vengeance at my earnest entreaty. She was brought to this castle and bred up under the name of Annot Lyle, the most beautiful little fairy that ever danced upon a heath by moonlight.

'It was long before Allan could endure the child's presence, until it occurred to him that perhaps she did not belong to the hated blood of his enemies, but had become their prisoner in one of their raids. It is possible that this was so, and Allan believes it firmly. He is particularly delighted by her skill in playing the harp: her music was found to improve his disturbed spirits, and cheer his gloomiest moods.

'Annot Lyle's nature is so sweet, her innocence and gaiety so fascinating, that she is treated in the castle rather as the sister of the proprietor than as a dependent upon his charity. Indeed, it is impossible for anyone to see her without being deeply interested by the simplicity and sweetness of her disposition.'

'Take care, my lord,' said Anderson, smiling; 'there is danger in such violent praise. Allan M'Aulay, as your lordship describes him, would be a dangerous rival.'

'Pooh! pooh!' said Lord Menteith, laughing, yet blushing at the same time. 'Allan does not fall in love; and for myself,' he said more gravely, 'Annot's unknown birth is a sufficient reason against our marriage.'

'I trust, my lord,' said Anderson, 'you will continue your interesting story.'

'It is almost finished,' said Lord Menteith. 'I have only to add that the M'Aulay clan pay much greater respect to Allan than to his brother, who is a bold-hearted Highlander, but has not the extraordinary character that

Allan has. Allan's great strength and courage, his energy and determination, are well known: and it is generally believed that he can foretell future events.'

'Such a character,' said Anderson, 'would have the deepest effect on the minds of a Highland host. We must secure Allan, my lord, at all events.'

'I agree, Anderson,' said the young nobleman. 'Well, I have finished my story, and it is time we were all asleep after the toilsome journey of the day.'

CHAPTER V

THE MUSTER

At an early hour in the morning the guests of the castle sprang from their repose; and Lord Menteith addressed the soldier, who was seated in a corner polishing his armour.

'Captain Dalgetty,' he said, 'the time has come when we must part, or become comrades in service. Either remain with us, or depart in peace.'

'Truly,' said the Captain, 'I will frankly own that if I like your pay as well as your provisions and your company, I do not care how soon I take the oath to your colours.'

'Our pay,' said Lord Menteith, 'must at present be small. I cannot promise you, Captain Dalgetty, more than half a dollar a day; but the other half-dollar you will receive at the end of the campaign.'

'My lord,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'I have so much value for that fertile and pleasant spot, my inheritance, Drumthwacket, that if I were certain it had fallen into possession of any of these Parliamentary rogues, I would take on with you for the campaign, in hopes of recovering my estate.'

'If Captain Dalgetty's estate,' said Sibbald, 'is a long waste moor south of Aberdeen, it was lately purchased by a rank rebel.'

'The hound!' exclaimed Dalgetty, in a rage. 'I will

pull him out of my father's house by the ears. And so, my lord Menteith, I am yours, hand and sword, body and soul, till the end of the campaign. Now I must go and see that Gustavus has his morning feed, and tell him we have taken new service.'

'There goes your precious recruit,' said Lord Menteith to Anderson, as the Captain left the room. 'I fear he will bring us little credit.'

'He is a man of the times, however,' said Anderson; 'and, without such, we shall hardly be able to carry on our enterprise.'

'Let us go down,' answered Lord Menteith, 'and see how our muster is likely to thrive, for I hear a good deal of bustle in the castle.'

When they entered the hall, Angus M'Aulay and his English guests greeted Lord Menteith, while Allan, who was seated by the fire, paid no attention to anyone.

Old Donald presently rushed into the room. 'A message from Vich Alister More: he is coming up in the evening with his attendants.'

'Shake down plenty of straw in the great barn,' said the master.

Another servant stumbled hastily in, announcing the approach of a second chieftain with his followers.

Presently Donald re-entered. 'The whole Highlands are astir, I think,' he said. 'Evan Dhu and his men will be here in an hour.'

More and more chiefs were announced. For each, Angus M'Aulay named a resting-place—the stables, the loft, the cowhouse, the sheds. At last he could find no more shelter for the Highlanders, who continued to arrive, and was sorely perplexed. But Allan, starting up with stern abruptness, said: 'Are the Highlanders to-day softer than their fathers? Let their plaids be their bed-clothes, and the heather their couch. Yes,' he continued, fixing his eyes with a ghastly stare upon the opposite

side of the hall, 'they may well begin as they are to end: many a man will sleep to-night upon the heath, who presently will lie there stiff and cold.'

'Do not foretell death to us, brother,' said Angus: 'that is unlucky.'

'And what luck do you expect?' said Allan, and suddenly fell, with a convulsive shudder, into the arms of Donald and his brother, who seated him upon a bench.

'Send for Annot Lyle and the harp,' Angus whispered to his servant. 'Pray accompany me to breakfast,' he added to the gentlemen present.

All followed their host except Lord Menteith, who lingered in one of the deep-set windows of the hall. Annot Lyle shortly after glided into the room, 'the lightest and most fairy figure,' as Lord Menteith had described her, 'that ever trod the turf by moonlight.' She was of small stature, and about eighteen years old. Her hair was dark gold, with clustering ringlets. Her complexion was fair, and her features had a merry expression. Although an orphan, Annot seemed the gayest and happiest of maidens. She was a universal favourite among the rough inhabitants of the castle, cheering them with her own happiness, like a sunbeam on a sullen sea.

Annot smiled and blushed when Lord Menteith stepped forward to meet her, and kindly wished her good morning. 'My cousin Allan,' he continued, 'needs the assistance of your voice and music.'

'My preserver,' said Annot Lyle, 'has a right to my poor efforts; and you, too, my lord—you, too, are my preserver, and were most active to save my life.'

So saying, she sat down upon the bench which Allan M'Aulay occupied, and, tuning her harp, sang an ancient melody.

As the song proceeded Allan's deep-knit brows relaxed, and his features, losing their wild and ferocious look, resumed their natural expression.

'Thank God!' he said, after sitting silent until the last sounds of the harp had ceased, 'the darkness has passed from my soul.'

'You owe thanks, cousin Allan,' said Lord Menteith, coming forward, 'to Annot Lyle, as well as to heaven, for this happy change. Half the Highlands will be here to-day. What will you give little Annot for making you fit company to meet them all?'

'You remind me,' said Allan, 'of what I have long intended to do.'

Having said this he left the room.

'If his gloomy mood returns,' said Lord Menteith, 'you must keep your harp in tune, my dear Annot.'

'This fit has been a long one,' said Annot, 'and I hope will not soon return. It is fearful to see a generous and affectionate mind thus affected.'

As she spoke in a low tone, Lord Menteith naturally drew close, and stooped forward, that he might hear better. When Allan suddenly entered the room, they as naturally drew back from each other, as if surprised in a conversation they wished to keep secret from him. Allan observed this; he stopped short at the door; his brows darkened, his eyes rolled. But, controlling himself, he advanced towards Annot Lyle and presented her with a box containing some ornaments that had belonged to his mother. Annot refused to accept so generous a present, but, to please Allan, chose one ring from the casket. To her alarm, she saw that the ring she had selected bore a death's-head above two crossed daggers, engraved upon it.

Allan looked closely at the ring, and uttered a deep sigh. 'I fear my gift is of ill omen,' he said.

'Allan,' said Lord Menteith, 'you are frightening the blood from Annot's cheeks with your visions. Why do you pretend to read the future, when by so doing you bring unhappiness?'

'You scorn my visions, young lord,' said Allan, 'but

three times, in visions, I have seen a Highlander plant his dagger in your bosom : such will be your fate.'

'I wish you would describe him to me,' said Lord Menteith, jestingly, 'and I will keep my sword ready for him.'

'The face of the vision has always been turned from me,' said Allan ; 'but your weapons will not protect you.'

'I shall not dine the less merrily among Highlanders to-day,' said Lord Menteith. 'Let us leave this argument, my friend, and go to see the progress of our military operations.'

They joined Angus M'Aulay and his English guests, and, in the military discussion that immediately took place, Allan showed a clearness of mind and strength of judgment totally at variance with the gloomy fancies that had lately occupied him.

CHAPTER VI

A COUNCIL OF WAR

The castle that morning was a busy and gallant sight. The various chiefs, as they arrived with their attendants, were greeted by the lord of the castle, and proceeded to the great hall, where they gathered in council.

Among the chieftains were the persons of greatest importance in the Highlands, some attracted by zeal for the royal cause, and many by their dislike of the severe domination that the Marquis of Argyle, since he had risen to influence in the state, had exercised over his Highland neighbours.

Argyle was possessed of considerable abilities and great power, but was unpopular among the Highland chiefs. He was fierce and bitter in his devotion to the Parliament ; his ambition was boundless ; and he was far from generous to inferior chiefs. Although a Highlander, and of a family distinguished for valour, he was suspected of being a better man in the council-room than on the field of

battle. Owing to a squint in one eye, he was called 'Grim Argyle.'

At first the assembled chiefs remained silent, until someone should open the business of the meeting. At length one of the most powerful of them said, 'We have been summoned here, M'Aulay, to consider important matters concerning the King's affairs; and we should like to know by whom they are to be explained to us.'

At M'Aulay's request Lord Menteith rose and addressed the assembly. 'I wish,' he said, 'that what I am about to propose, came from some person better known to you all. Since, however, I am the spokesman, I tell you that those who wish to preserve their liberty have not a moment to lose. The Scotch Parliament, without even the pretext of a national grievance, has sent a strong army to assist the rebels in England against the King in a quarrel with which Scotland has no concern. Fortunately, the eagerness of the Parliament to pursue its treasonable purpose has blinded it to the risks it is about to run. The moment is most favourable for all loyal Scotchmen to show that the base plots against the King are due to the selfish ambition of a few traitors.'

'Many powerful chieftains in the north,' he continued, 'are determined to exert their utmost energy in the royal cause in the south; the King has many friends who are only waiting for the waving of the royal banner to take up arms, and who will outweigh the Parliament's supporters in that part of the country. The north of England, too, is zealous on the King's behalf. In the West Highlands, the Parliament has no support, except that of one person, as well known as he is odious, I mean "Grim Argyle." But is there a single man who, on looking round this hall, can for a moment doubt the success of the powerful and gallant chieftains here assembled, against the utmost force that Argyle can collect?

'I need only add further that ample money and ammuni-

tion have been provided for the army'—(here Dalgetty pricked up his ears); 'that officers of ability and experience in the foreign wars' (the Captain drew himself up and looked round) 'have promised to help in training troops; and that a numerous body of Irish have landed in the West Highlands, and, in spite of Argyle's attempts to prevent them, are marching hither.

'Let the noble chiefs assembled here unite, heart and hand, in the common cause, and collect their followers with such speed as to leave the enemy no time to recover from the panic that will overtake them. I myself am neither among the richest nor the most powerful of the Scottish nobility, but I am determined to devote both life and fortune to preserve the liberty of an ancient and honourable nation. If those who are more powerful are equally prompt, I trust we shall deserve the thanks of our King, and the gratitude of our descendants.'

Loud applause followed this speech of Lord Menteith's, and showed that all present approved the sentiments he had expressed; but, when the shout had died away, the chiefs still gazed at each other as if something more remained to be settled. After some whispering among themselves, a grey-haired chieftain replied to what had been said.

'Lord Menteith,' he said, 'you have spoken well; like you, we all burn to help the King. But strength alone, without the brain of the leader, will not bring victory. I ask you who is to raise our banner? Shall we risk our children before we know who is to guide them? Where is the royal commission under which the King's subjects are to be called to arms? We will not arm ourselves against the general peace of Scotland unless by the express commands of the King, and under a leader fit to command such nobles as are gathered here.'

A dispute then arose among the chieftains, some proposing one leader, some another. The quarrel seemed

likely to lead to blows, until Lord Menteith interfered, imploring the noblemen to remember that the interests of Scotland, the liberty of their country, and the cause of the King ought to be superior in their eyes to any personal disputes respecting rank and precedence.

A Highland chief supported Lord Menteith's arguments. 'It is not by looking to our own pretensions,' he said, 'that we shall serve King Charles. My voice shall be for that general whom the King shall name, who will doubtless possess those qualities that are necessary to command men like us. He must be high-born; wise and skilful; bravest among the brave; temperate, firm, and manly. Such is the man that must command us. Are you prepared, Lord Menteith, to say where such a general is to be found?'

'There is but ONE,' said Allan M'Aulay; 'and here,' he said, laying his hand upon the shoulder of Anderson, who stood behind Lord Menteith, 'here he stands!'

The general surprise of the meeting was expressed by an impatient murmur; when Anderson, throwing back the cloak in which his face was muffled, and stepping forward, spoke thus: 'I did not long mean to be a silent spectator of this interesting scene, although my hasty friend has obliged me to disclose myself sooner than I intended. The King has honoured me with this parchment: may my deeds in his service show me deserving of the honour. This paper is a commission, under the great seal, to James Graham, Earl of Montrose, to command the forces that are to be assembled for the service of his Majesty in this kingdom.'

A loud shout of approval burst from the assembly. There was, in fact, no other person to whom, in point of rank, these proud mountaineers would have been willing to submit. Montrose's bitter hostility to the Marquis of Argyle ensured his engaging in the war with sufficient energy, while his well-known military talents and his

tried valour afforded every hope of his bringing it to a favourable conclusion.

The chiefs stood silent and bareheaded to hear the reading of the royal warrant. It authorized the Earl of Montrose to assemble the King's subjects in arms for the putting down of the present rebellion, and gave him full powers as commander.

When the reading was finished, a shout burst from the assembled chiefs, proving their ready obedience to the will of their sovereign. Montrose hastened to thank them, and by addressing them individually, showed how thoroughly he was acquainted with the men he was to command.

Montrose's graceful manner, expressive features, and dignified bearing made a singular contrast with the coarseness and meanness of his dress. His form and face were of the kind that grew more interesting to the observer the longer he gazed. He was of middle stature, but remarkably well built, and capable of exerting great force and enduring much fatigue. He enjoyed a constitution of iron, which enabled him to bear the trials of his extraordinary campaigns, through all of which he subjected himself to the hardships of the meanest soldiers.

His long brown hair was parted on the top of his head, and hung down on each side in curled locks ; his nose was high, his grey eyes quick and decided. His handsome face was full of character. On occasion, his eyes shone with the energy and fire of genius, and, when he spoke, it was with natural eloquence and the authority of talent.

In the discussions that followed his disclosing himself Montrose explained the various risks he had run in his present undertaking. He had attempted to assemble a force in the north of England, with which to march into Scotland ; but his plan failed, and he was forced to travel through the Lowlands in disguise, assisted by his kinsman Lord Menteith. He could not explain how Allan M'Aulay had come to know him, but Allan replied, ' The Earl of

Montrose need not be surprised if he is known to thousands, of whom he himself can retain no memory.'

'By my honour,' exclaimed Captain Dalgetty, 'I am proud and happy to draw a sword under your lordship's command; and I forgive Mr. Allan M'Aulay for thrusting me down yesterday to the lowest seat at the table, since I was only giving place to a noble earl, my future commander-in-chief.'

'Captain Dalgetty,' said Montrose—'I should say Major Dalgetty—hear this news. The Irish whom you will command, are now within a few miles.'

The Captain's reply was interrupted by Allan M'Aulay, who said hastily, 'Room for an unexpected and unwelcome guest!'

At the same moment the door of the hall opened, and a tall, grey-haired man of stately appearance presented himself to the assembly. Casting a stern glance upon the assembly of chiefs, he said, 'To which of this assembly am I to address myself as leader?'

'Address yourself to me, Sir Duncan Campbell,' said Montrose, stepping forward.

'To you!' said Sir Duncan Campbell, with some scorn.

'Yes, to me,' repeated Montrose, 'to the Earl of Montrose, if you have forgotten him.'

'I have now, at least,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'some difficulty in recognizing him in the disguise of a groom. And yet I might have guessed that no evil influence inferior to your lordship's could have collected this rash assembly of misguided persons.'

'It was you and your kinsmen,' replied Montrose, 'who began this country's troubles. But let us leave this dispute; tell us the tidings you have brought from your chief, the Marquis of Argyle, for I conclude you have come to this meeting in his name.'

'It is in the name of the Marquis of Argyle,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'and in the name of the Scotch Parlia-

ment, that I demand to know the meaning of this strange assembly. Are these preparations directed against Argyle alone, or are all the peaceful and orderly inhabitants of Scotland to suffer ?'

'I would ask,' said a wild-looking chief, starting hastily up, 'one question of Sir Duncan Campbell, before he proceeds further. Has he brought more than one life to this castle, that he ventures to intrude among us for the purposes of insult ?'

'Gentlemen,' said Montrose, 'let me implore your patience. A messenger who comes among us as an ambassador, is entitled to free speech and a safe conduct. And, since Sir Duncan Campbell is so pressing, I will inform him that he is in an assembly of the King's loyal subjects, summoned by me, in his Majesty's name and authority, and under the authority of his Majesty's royal commission.'

'We are to have then, I suppose,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'a civil war. I have been too long a soldier to view it with anxiety, but it would have been more for my Lord of Montrose's honour if in this matter he had consulted his own ambition less and the peace of the country more.'

'The men who brought the country to its present state, Sir Duncan,' answered Montrose, 'and who rendered necessary the sharp remedies we are now reluctantly about to use, consulted their ambition and self-interest.'

'I shall be sorry,' said Sir Duncan, 'to carry back this language to the Marquis of Argyle. His lordship, to prevent the bloody feuds that must follow a Highland war, would be contented if terms of truce could be arranged to the north of the Highland line, as there is ground enough in Scotland to fight upon, without neighbours' destroying each other's families and possessions.'

'If the terms of such a truce could be equally fixed,' said Montrose, 'and if we could obtain security that your

Marquis would observe these terms faithfully, I, for my part, should be content to have peace behind us, since we must carry war before us. But, Sir Duncan, you are too experienced a soldier for us to permit you to remain here and witness our proceedings. When you have refreshed yourself, we shall recommend your speedy return to Inverary, and will send with you a gentleman to adjust on our behalf the terms of the Highland armistice, in case the Marquis shall be found serious in proposing such a measure.' Sir Duncan Campbell assented by a bow.

'Menteith,' continued Montrose, 'will you have the goodness to attend Sir Duncan Campbell, while we decide who shall return with him to his chief?'

'Menteith,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'I am grieved to see you, at your early age, engaged in such rebellious schemes.'

'I am young,' answered Menteith, 'yet old enough to distinguish between right and wrong, between loyalty and rebellion.'

'And you, too, my friend, Allan M'Aulay,' said Sir Duncan, taking his hand, 'must we also call each other enemies, we, who have been so often allied against the Children of the Mist, our common foe?' Then, turning round to the meeting, he said, 'Farewell, gentlemen; your refusal to accept a settlement gives me deep affliction.'

Sir Duncan Campbell left the hall, accompanied by Allan M'Aulay and Lord Menteith. 'There goes a true-bred Campbell,' said Montrose, as the knight departed, 'for their words are always fair, and their deeds treacherous.'

'Pardon me, my lord,' said a chieftain, 'I must confess that I have always found Sir Duncan brave in war, honest in peace, and true in council.'

'By his own disposition,' said Montrose, 'he undoubtedly is such; but he now acts as the tool of his chief, the Marquis, the falsest man that ever drew breath. And, M'Aulay,' he continued in a whisper to his host, 'lest he should make

some impression on Menteith or on your brother, send music into their room, to prevent his leading them into any private schemes.'

'I will send Annot Lyle and her harp,' answered M'Aulay, and left the apartment to give orders accordingly.

Meanwhile a warm discussion took place as to who should undertake the perilous task of returning with Sir Duncan to Inverary. The duty could not be proposed to the higher nobles, who considered themselves the equals of 'Grim Argyle'; while the inferior chiefs were reluctant, fearing to incur Argyle's displeasure. In this difficulty Montrose, who considered the proposed armistice as a mere trick on the part of Argyle, although he had not ventured to reject it bluntly in the presence of those whom it concerned so nearly, resolved to impose the danger and dignity upon Captain Dalgetty, who had neither kinsmen nor estate in the Highlands upon which Argyle could expend his wrath.

'But I have a neck,' said Dalgetty bluntly, 'and what if he chooses to avenge himself upon that? I know more than one case where an honourable ambassador has been hanged as a spy.'

'By my honour, Captain Dalgetty,' said Montrose, 'if the Marquis dares to ill-treat you, contrary to the rules of war, you may depend upon my taking such thorough vengeance that all Scotland shall ring with it.'

'That will do little good to Dalgetty,' returned the Captain; 'but courage! With my estate of Drumthwacket in view, I will not refuse your Excellency's commission, being conscious it becomes a soldier of honour to obey his commander's orders, in spite of scaffold and sword.'

'That is a gallant resolve,' said Montrose; 'and, if you will come aside with me, I will give you the conditions to be laid before Argyle, upon which we are willing to grant him a truce for his Highland dominions.'

When Montrose had given Captain Dalgetty full instructions, he said, 'I need not remind an officer who has served under the great Gustavus that, when a person is sent with a flag of truce, his general expects from him, on his return, some account of the state of the enemy's affairs, as far as they come under his observation. In short, Captain Dalgetty, you must keep your eyes open.'

'Ah, ha! your Excellency,' said the Captain, twisting his hard features into an expression of cunning and intelligence, 'if they do not put my head in a bag, you may rely on a precise account of whatever Dugald Dalgetty shall hear or see.'

'Enough,' answered Montrose; 'farewell, Captain Dalgetty. Remember that the most important part of your commission lies in what I have last said to you.'

Dalgetty once more gave a knowing grin, and withdrew to provide food for his horse and himself on his approaching journey.

CHAPTER VII

ANNOT LYLE

In a small apartment, remote from the rest of the guests assembled at the castle, Sir Duncan Campbell was provided with refreshments, and respectfully attended by Lord Menteith and Allan M'Aulay. He spoke to the latter about a campaign in which they had been engaged together against the Children of the Mist, with whom Sir Duncan Campbell had as deadly a feud as the M'Aulays. Soon, however, Sir Duncan changed the topic of conversation.

'It grieves me to the heart,' he said, 'to see that friends and neighbours are likely to be engaged hand to hand in a cause that so little concerns them. What does it matter to the Highland chiefs whether King or Parliament gets the upper hand? Would it not be better to let them settle their differences without interference, while the chiefs

take the opportunity of establishing their own authority so firmly that neither King nor Parliament will be able to question it ?'

'It is to my brother,' said Allan, 'the eldest of our family, that you should make these proposals. I am bound to set an example by cheerfully obeying my brother's commands.'

'The cause, also,' said Lord Menteith, 'is far more general than Sir Duncan Campbell supposes. The question is if we will continue to be governed by a set of persons in no way superior to ourselves, instead of returning to the government of the King against whom they have rebelled. And, if I may speak plainly, it seems very clear to me that the only effect produced in the Highlands by the present government will be to increase the power of the Campbells at the expense of every independent chief.'

'You are prejudiced, my lord,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'and it is useless to discuss the matter with you. Allow me only to express my sorrow for the disastrous fate to which Angus M'Aulay's natural rashness and your lordship's influence are dragging my gallant friend Allan, with his clan, and many a brave man besides.'

'Sir Duncan,' replied Allan gloomily, 'the iron hand of destiny has branded our fate upon our foreheads.'

Sir Duncan was about to reply when the door opened and Annot Lyle, with her harp in her hand, entered the apartment. Her dress was rich, but old-fashioned : she wore a blue jacket, finely embroidered, its sleeves fringed with gold ; her dress beneath was of light blue satin. Her wealth of light hair almost hid her laughing eyes, while, with a smile and blush, she mentioned that she had M'Aulay's instructions to ask them if they would like music. Sir Duncan Campbell gazed with considerable surprise and interest at the lovely maiden.

'Can this beautiful and elegant girl,' he whispered to Allan, 'be a musician employed by your brother ?'

'By no means,' answered Allan hastily, yet with some hesitation; 'she is a—a near relation of our family—and treated,' he added more firmly, 'as an adopted daughter in our house.'

As he spoke he rose and courteously offered Annot his seat. Sir Duncan kept his eyes fixed upon Annot with an expression of deep interest. The old knight's steady gaze embarrassed the maiden, but, tuning her instrument, she sang a song to her own accompaniment.

The song seemed to produce a deep effect upon Sir Duncan Campbell. He even withdrew his eyes from the singer, as if unwilling to allow them to rest on an object so interesting. The chief's proud, stern features were agitated; his brow became clouded; he dropped his large, shaggy, grey eyebrows until they almost concealed his eyes, on the lids of which a tear glistened. He remained silent and still for a minute or two after the last note had ceased. He then raised his head, and seemed about to speak to Annot Lyle; but suddenly he changed his purpose, and was beginning to address Allan when the door opened and the lord of the castle appeared.

Angus M'Aulay, speaking in an embarrassed, hesitating way, let Sir Duncan Campbell know that the gentleman who was to accompany him was waiting in readiness, and that all was prepared for his return to Inverary.

Sir Duncan Campbell rose up very indignantly. 'I little expected this,' he said angrily. 'I little thought that there was a chief in the West Highlands who would order me to leave his castle when the sun was sinking, and before I had finished refreshing myself. But farewell, sir; food grudgingly given does not satisfy the appetite. When I next visit your castle it shall be with a naked sword in one hand and a firebrand in the other.'

'When you come,' said Angus, 'I promise to meet you fairly, even if you bring five hundred Campbells at your back.'

'Threatened men,' said Sir Duncan, 'live long. I pay no heed to your boasts, Angus M'Aulay. To you, my lord Menteith, and to Allan I leave my thanks. And to you, pretty maiden,' he said, addressing Annot Lyle, 'this little present for having opened a fountain that has been dry for many a year.' So saying, he left the apartment, and commanded his attendants to be summoned.

CHAPTER VIII

DALGETTY'S MISSION

In the courtyard Sir Duncan mounted his horse. Followed by six attendants on horseback, and accompanied by the noble Captain Dalgetty astride Gustavus, he left the castle.

The journey was long and toilsome, since Sir Duncan carefully avoided the nearer and more secret paths by which Argyle's country could be approached from the westward. Shunning the Highlands and falling into the Low-country, he made for the nearest seaport, where he had several boats at his command. In one of these they embarked, together with Gustavus.

They pursued their way rapidly with sails and oars, and early the next morning the boat was under the walls of Sir Duncan Campbell's castle, Ardenvohr.

As Captain Dalgetty stood upon the deck, the castle rose high above him: it was a gloomy square tower of considerable size and great height, built on a precipice overlooking the sea.

Sir Duncan Campbell was already ashore, and a small boat soon conveyed Captain Dalgetty to the beach. The Captain wished to wait until Gustavus was safely landed also, but the boatmen hustled him towards an entrance in the face of the rock, where Sir Duncan Campbell was waiting to receive him.

Captain Dalgetty followed his host up a dark staircase that wound upwards through the rock to a short gallery cut in the open face of the cliff. The path then led into the rock again.

Having ascended a second staircase, Sir Duncan and Captain Dalgetty found themselves again on an open platform, from which they passed up a third flight of steps, which led them into a battery at the foot of the tower.

Captain Dalgetty had noticed, during the ascent, how strongly the castle was defended by guns and by places prepared for musket-fire; but he had no sooner arrived in the courtyard than he began to explain to Sir Duncan how the defences might be improved.

Sir Duncan, without replying, conducted the soldier into the tower. They entered a hall hung with tapestry, where an excellent breakfast was prepared. The Captain ate greedily, and when he had finished he proceeded to examine the ground around the castle, very carefully, from each window in the room. 'I see,' he said presently, 'they have got Gustavus safely ashore. Good fellow! I should know that toss of his head among a whole squadron. I must go to see how they treat him.'

Sir Duncan, weary of his rough-mannered guest, had previously left the room; so Captain Dalgetty proceeded alone to the first staircase leading downwards to the beach. He was about to descend, when two Highland sentinels advanced, presented their axes, and gave him to understand he might not pass. Sir Duncan Campbell, however, approached and conducted the Captain to the stables, where he arranged Gustavus according to his pleasure.

After this duty had been carefully performed they returned to the castle, and Sir Duncan, leading Captain Dalgetty to an apartment, left him there to prepare for dinner.

The gallant Captain would willingly have employed his leisure in studying the exterior of Sir Duncan's castle, and

in examining its defences; but an armed sentinel, who was on guard at the door of his apartment, signed to him that he was not allowed to pass.

Captain Dalgetty therefore sat down and busied himself polishing his armour, until he heard the joyful sound of the dinner-bell. The sentinel then conducted him to the hall, where a table was laid for three persons.

Sir Duncan entered with his wife, a tall, melancholy lady, dressed in deep mourning, whom he presented to the Captain.

The meal passed almost in silence; for it was not Captain Dalgetty's habit to employ his mouth in talking when it could be more profitably occupied, and Sir Duncan and his wife only occasionally exchanged a few words.

When the dishes were removed, Sir Duncan Campbell addressed his guest. 'Captain Dalgetty,' he said, 'I must inform you that I have some business to complete to-night, in order to enable me to ride with you to-morrow towards Inverary; and therefore——'

'To ride with this person to-morrow!' exclaimed his lady. 'Such cannot be your purpose, Sir Duncan, unless you have forgotten that to-morrow is a sad anniversary.'

'I had not forgotten,' answered Sir Duncan; 'how is it possible I can ever forget? But I must send this officer onward to Inverary, without loss of time.'

'Yet surely you need not accompany him yourself?' inquired the lady.

'It would be better for me to do so,' said Sir Duncan; 'yet I can write to the Marquis and follow on the next day.—Captain Dalgetty, I will give you a letter, explaining to the Marquis of Argyle for what purpose you are sent to him. You will please prepare to travel to Inverary early to-morrow morning.'

'Sir Duncan Campbell,' said Dalgetty, 'I pray you to remember the blot that will fall upon your honour, if you expose me to any danger through lack of due care.'

'You are under the safeguard of my honour, sir,' answered Sir Duncan Campbell. 'And now,' he continued, rising, 'I must set the example of retiring.'

Dalgetty saw he must follow the hint, though the hour was early. 'I trust to your word, Sir Duncan,' he said; 'I am now ready to attend your sentinel to my private place of repose.'

Soon after the Captain had reached his apartment one of Sir Duncan Campbell's attendants brought him a sealed packet, addressed to the Marquis of Argyle, and informed him that he must take horse at an early hour next day for Inverary, where the packet would be his introduction and passport.

Not forgetting that it was his object to collect information, and anxious, for his own sake, to learn Sir Duncan's reasons for sending him on alone, the Captain asked the messenger what were the reasons that detained his master at home on the following day. The man replied, 'It is the habit of Sir Duncan and his wife to observe as a day of solemn fasting and mourning the anniversary on which their castle was taken by surprise, and their four children cruelly destroyed, by the Children of the Mist during Sir Duncan's absence.' So saying, he left the apartment.

No sooner was he gone than the heavy toll of the castle-bell summoned its inhabitants to prayer. Captain Dalgetty heard the shrill clamour of the females and the deeper tones of the men, as they hurried to the chapel. 'While they are all away,' thought the soldier to himself, 'I will look out, take a mouthful of fresh air, and find out what I can about this place.'

Accordingly, when all was quiet, he opened the door of his room, and prepared to leave it, when he saw his friend with the axe advancing towards him, humming a tune. The Captain, putting the best face upon his situation he could, whistled in a tone still louder than the notes of the sentinel; and retreating pace by pace, with an air of

indifference, as if his only purpose had been to breathe a little fresh air, he shut the door in the face of his guard, when the fellow had approached within a few paces of him.

'Very well,' thought the Captain to himself, 'if Sir Duncan does not trust me, I do not see that I am under any obligation towards him.' Comforting himself with this reflection, Captain Dalgetty retired to his bed.

He was summoned at break of day, and after making a hearty meal, proceeded to take horse for Inverary.

When the Captain mounted Gustavus he found himself attended, or perhaps guarded, by six Campbells, well armed, and commanded by a clansman of superior rank. Neither the commander nor any of his party spoke English.

The Captain rode, and his military attendants walked; but they were so active, and the road was so rough, that Captain Dalgetty found difficulty in keeping up with his guides. He observed that they watched him sharply, as if expecting some effort to escape; and once, as he lingered behind at the crossing of a brook, one of the men raised his gun, giving him to understand that he would run some risk in case of an attempt to part company.

Dalgetty did not like the close watch maintained upon his person, but saw it was hopeless for him to try to escape in a wild and unknown country. He therefore plodded patiently on through a wilderness, treading paths only known to shepherds and cattle-drivers, and passing with much discomfort through the sublime mountain scenery.

At length they arrived on the southern shore of the noble lake upon which Inverary is situated; and a bugle-call from the leader of the Captain's attendants summoned a well-manned boat, which received the party on board, including Gustavus.

The scenery was of the grandest that nature affords. Two rivers poured into the lake from the dark woods. Upon a gentle slope ascending from the shore stood a noble old castle; and a picturesque peak, starting abruptly

from the lake, raised its rugged brow into the mists of heaven.

The noble scene, however, aroused no admiration in Captain Dalgetty. He had eaten nothing since daybreak, and he was now chiefly interested in the smoke that ascended from the castle chimneys and gave promise of a meal.

The boat soon approached the rugged pier that projected into the lake from the little town of Inverary, which stretched upwards to the principal gate of the castle.

CHAPTER IX

'GRIM ARGYLE'

When Captain Dalgetty and his escort left the boat, and proceeded towards the castle, they saw, on reaching the market-place of the town, that a rough gallows was erected, on which hung five dead bodies. Two or three women sat beneath, who mourned the dead in low tones.

The Captain, hearing a word or two of English escape from a Highlander of decent appearance, immediately halted Gustavus and addressed him. 'May I ask, my friend, for what misdeeds these men have been punished ?'

The Highlander replied, 'They are three Highland robbers and two Englishmen who would not do something that the Marquis of Argyle ordered them.' So saying, he walked away with an air of indifference.

Dalgetty shrugged his shoulders and proceeded, for his chief attendant had already shown signs of impatience.

At the gate of the castle another terrible example of Argyle's power awaited him. In a fenced space stood a huge block on which lay an axe; both block and axe were smeared with recent blood.

While Dalgetty was looking at this new object of terror his guide suddenly pulled his sleeve, winked, and pointed to a pole that supported a human head. As the Highlander

drew the Captain's attention to this ghastly spectacle, his grim expression seemed to his fellow-traveller to promise nothing good.

Dalgetty dismounted from his horse at the gateway, and Gustavus was led away to a stable. The Captain then followed his guide into a guard-room filled with armed Highlanders, where he was told to stay until his arrival was reported to the Marquis. Before the guide withdrew, Dalgetty gave him Sir Duncan Campbell's packet, making signs that it was to be delivered into the Marquis's own hands.

After the Captain had waited about half an hour, a person dressed in black velvet and wearing a gold chain, who was the steward of the house, entered and solemnly invited Dalgetty to follow him to his master's presence.

They passed through several apartments, thronged with attendants and visitors, and finally reached an anteroom filled with servants, dressed in brown and yellow, the colours of the family, who stood in double file, gazing in silence upon Captain Dalgetty as he passed between their ranks.

Folding doors were opened for Dalgetty, and disclosed a long room decorated with tapestry and family portraits, and having a ceiling of wood richly carved and gilded. The sunbeams glimmered through long, narrow windows, filled with painted glass. At the upper end of this magnificent apartment stood the Marquis of Argyle, the centre of a splendid circle of Scotch gentlemen, all richly dressed.

The Marquis himself was dressed in a manner rather rich than gay. His dark complexion, furrowed forehead, and downcast look gave him the appearance of one frequently engaged in the consideration of important affairs. The cast in his eye added to his sinister look. In person, he was tall and thin ; his manner was cold and dignified. He was adored by his own clan, whose advancement he had greatly studied, and equally disliked by the Highlanders

of other clans, some of whom he had already stripped of their possessions, while others thought themselves in danger from his future schemes, and all dreaded the height to which he had risen.

The Marquis of Argyle, surrounded by his councillors, the officers of his household, and his train of servants, made an impressive figure. Captain Dalgetty, however, seemed perfectly at ease in his presence. That gallant person had fought his way through wars in which a brave and successful soldier was a companion for princes, he had sat at the feasts of kings, and therefore was not a person to be overawed by the dignity that surrounded the Marquis of Argyle. Indeed, he had by nature so good an opinion of himself that he felt as much at ease in the most exalted society as among his own ordinary companions.

He advanced, therefore, to the upper end of the room with complete self-confidence, and would have gone close up to Argyle before speaking, had not the latter waved his hand, as a signal to him to stop short. Captain Dalgetty accordingly did so, saluted, and addressed the Marquis, 'Good day to you, my lord—or rather, good evening.'

'Who are you, sir, and what is your business?' demanded the Marquis coldly.

'That is a fair question, my lord,' answered Dalgetty, 'which I shall forthwith answer.'

'See who or what he is, Neal,' said the Marquis sternly to a gentleman who stood near him.

'I will save the honourable gentleman the trouble,' continued the Captain. 'I am Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, late Captain in various services, and now Major of a regiment of Irish. I have come with a flag of truce from a high and powerful lord, James, Earl of Montrose, and other noble persons now in arms for his Majesty. And so, God save King Charles!'

'Do you know where you are, and the danger of deceiving us, sir,' demanded the Marquis, 'that you answer me as

if I were a child or a fool? The Earl of Montrose is with the English; and I suspect you are one of those Irish traitors who have come into this country to burn and slay.'

'My lord,' replied Captain Dalgetty, 'I am a Major of Irish, but no traitor. I may mention I have served under the invincible Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, and other great captains, both dead and living. As for the noble Earl of Montrose, I pray your lordship to read these papers, which give me full power to treat with you in his name.'

The Marquis looked slightingly at the signed and sealed paper that Captain Dalgetty handed to him, and, throwing it with contempt upon a table, asked those around them: 'What does this man deserve who comes as the confessed agent of malignant traitors, in arms against the state?'

'The gallows,' was the ready answer of one of the bystanders.

'I will ask that honourable gentleman who has last spoken,' said Dalgetty, 'to be less hasty in giving advice, and also your lordship to be cautious of adopting the same. Your lordship must admit that, as an envoy, come to discuss terms under a truce, I am entitled to fair treatment by you.'

'You have not come here to lecture us upon the laws of war, sir,' said the Marquis, 'which do not apply to rebels. You shall suffer the penalty of your insolence and folly for bringing a traitorous message to me, the Lord Justice of Scotland. My duty calls upon me to punish such an offence with death.'

'Gentlemen,' said the Captain, who began to dislike the turn his mission was taking, 'remember that the Earl of Montrose will hold you responsible for whatever injury I sustain, and will take vengeance on you.'

This threat was received with a scornful laugh.

'Well, gentlemen,' further urged the unfortunate Captain, 'I trust you will admit I have the promise of an honourable gentleman of your own name, Sir Duncan Campbell,

that I shall be safe in this mission. If you break the truce towards me, you will disgrace him.'

This seemed to be new information to many of the gentlemen, for they spoke aside with one another, and the Marquis's face showed impatience and annoyance.

'Does Sir Duncan pledge his honour for this person's safety, my lord?' asked one of the company, addressing the Marquis.

'I do not believe it,' answered the Marquis; 'but I have not yet had time to read his letter.'

'We pray your lordship to do so,' said another of the Campbells; 'our own name must not suffer discredit through such a fellow as this.'

'As to Sir Duncan Campbell's promise of my safety,' interrupted Dalgetty eagerly, 'I will stake my life that he makes good my words, when he comes here to-morrow.'

'If Sir Duncan is soon expected, my lord,' said one of the chiefs, 'it would be a pity to punish this poor man before he arrives.'

The chiefs closed around the Marquis, who examined Sir Duncan Campbell's letter. After conversing with his councillors, Argyle gave orders for the prisoner to be removed to a place of safety.

'Prisoner!' exclaimed Dalgetty, as two Highlanders seized him from behind. He struggled so violently that the Marquis of Argyle changed colour, and stepped back with his hand on his sword, while several of his clan threw themselves between him and the prisoner. But the Highland guards were too strong, and the unlucky Captain was deprived of his weapons and dragged away through several gloomy passages to a small door barred with iron. The door was opened by a grim old Highlander with a long white beard, and revealed a very steep and narrow flight of steps leading downward. The Captain's guard pushed him down two or three steps, and then, unloosing his arms, left him to grope his way to the bottom as he could.

CHAPTER X

PRISON

The door was locked behind Captain Dalgetty, who proceeded to descend cautiously, in total darkness, the narrow and broken stair. Missing his footing, he fell down the four or five last steps, and, at the bottom, stumbled over a bundle of something soft, which stirred and uttered a groan. The Captain staggered forward, and finally fell upon his hands and knees on the floor of a damp and stone-paved dungeon.

As soon as Dalgetty recovered, he demanded to know over whom he had stumbled.

'He was a man a month ago,' answered a hollow and broken voice.

'And what is he now, then,' said Dalgetty, 'that he thinks it fitting to lie curled up on the lowest step of the stairs, that honest gentlemen, who happen to be in trouble, may break their noses over him?'

'He is a wretched trunk,' replied the same voice, 'from which the boughs have one by one been cut away. But do you, a soldier, complain on account of a fall?'

'In this cursed dark cavern,' said the Captain, 'how do you know I am a soldier?'

'I heard your armour rattle as you fell,' replied the prisoner, 'and now I see it glimmer. When you have remained as long as I in this darkness, your eyes will learn to penetrate it?'

'I would prefer to be hanged!' said Dalgetty. 'But what food have you got here, brother in affliction?'

'Bread and water once a day,' replied the voice. 'They are in the corner by your right hand. Take them and welcome. My need for food is almost past.'

Dalgetty at once groped out the provisions and began to munch at the stale black oaten loaf.

'The bread,' he muttered (with his mouth full at the same time), 'is not very savoury.' However, he speedily finished the provisions, wrapped himself in his cloak, and, seating himself in a corner of the dungeon, began to question his fellow-captive.

'My honest friend,' said he, 'you and I, being comrades in misfortune, should be better acquainted. I am Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, and so forth, Major in a regiment of loyal Irish, and Envoy Extraordinary of a high and mighty lord, James, Earl of Montrose. Pray, what is your name?'

'Ranald MacEagh is my name—that is, Ranald, Son of the Mist.'

'And what on earth brought you here?'

'My misfortunes and my crimes,' answered Ranald. 'Do you know Sir Duncan Campbell, and where he is now?'

'I know him,' answered the Captain. 'This day he is fasting at Ardenvohr; to-morrow he will feast at Inverary.'

'Then let him know that one, who is his worst foe and his best friend, claims his help.'

'That is not a message I should care to carry,' answered Dalgetty. 'Sir Duncan is not a person to whom one can speak in riddles.'

'Then tell him,' said the prisoner, 'that I am the hunter that, fifteen years ago, found out his den and destroyed his offspring. I led the band that surprised Ardenvohr, and killed his four children.'

'Truly, my honest friend,' said Dalgetty, 'if that is your best recommendation to Sir Duncan's favour, I do not advise you to ask his help. But tell me, Ranald, what was the cause of the war?'

'We had been hunted by the M'Aulays and other western tribes, till our possessions became unsafe for us.'

'Ah, ha!' said Dalgetty, 'I have a faint recollection of having heard of that matter. Did you not place a dead man's head upon your host's table?'

'You have heard, then,' said Ranald, 'the tale of our revenge on the haughty forester? We were attacked by Sir Duncan, and my brother was killed. I vowed revenge, and it is a vow I have never broken.'

'But how will this story interest Sir Duncan on your behalf?' asked Dalgetty.

'Sir Duncan had four children,' said the Highlander. 'Three died by our daggers, but the fourth survives. Sir Duncan would give more to caress the fourth child that remains than to torture my old bones. If I choose to speak one word, I can turn his day of fasting into a day of rejoicing.'

'I presume, Ranald,' continued Dalgetty, 'that the three fellows I saw strung up in the market-place had some connection with you?'

After a brief pause, the Highlander replied in a tone of strong emotion: 'They were my sons, stranger. Why should I wish to survive them? One grandson, Kenneth, alone is left to me: he must be trained to revenge. For his sake I will purchase my life and freedom by revealing my secret to the Knight of Ardenvohr.'

'You may gain your end more easily,' said a third voice, interrupting the conversation, 'by entrusting it to me.'

All Highlanders are superstitious. 'The enemy of mankind is among us!' cried Ranald MacEagh, springing to his feet. Captain Dalgetty, too, felt some alarm, and began to repeat all the prayers he had ever heard.

'Though I come strangely among you,' said the voice they had heard before, 'I am mortal like yourselves, and my assistance may help you in your present straits, if you are not too proud to accept advice.'

While the stranger thus spoke, he withdrew the shade of a dark lantern, by the feeble light of which Dalgetty could only discern that the mysterious visitor was a tall man, dressed in a cloak of the Argyle colour. 'How did

you come among us ?' asked the Captain. 'If you had opened the door the creak of its rusty bars would have been heard.'

'I keep my secret,' answered the stranger, 'until you reveal to me some of yours. Perhaps I shall be persuaded to let you out where I myself came in.'

'I have no secrets of my own,' said Captain Dalgetty, 'and few belonging to others. What secrets do you want to know ?'

'It is not with you I have first to do,' replied the stranger, turning his light full on the wild and wasted features and the large limbs of Ranald MacEagh, who crouched against the dungeon-wall.

'I have brought you some better food, my friend,' said the stranger. 'If you are to die to-morrow, it is no reason why you should not live to-night.'

'None at all—no reason in creation,' replied the ready Captain Dalgetty, and at once began to unpack the contents of a small basket that the stranger had brought under his cloak, while the Highlander disdained the present.

'Here's to you, my friend,' said the Captain, who had already devoured a huge piece of roasted kid. 'What is your name ?'

'Murdoch Campbell, sir,' answered the stranger, 'a servant of the Marquis of Argyle.'

'Well, honest Murdoch, your good health ! But I see you wish to speak with my friend Ranald MacEagh here. Never mind my presence ; I'll get into this corner with the basket, and my jaws will make noise enough to prevent my ears from hearing you.'

Notwithstanding this promise, the veteran listened as hard as he could, and, owing to the narrowness of the dungeon, was able to overhear easily the following conversation.

'Are you aware, Son of the Mist,' said the Campbell, 'that you will never leave this place, excepting for the

gallows ? What would you do to turn away the bitterness of the hour ?'

'Anything,' answered MacEagh, 'except call myself the friend of your tribe !'

'We scorn the friendship of robbers,' answered Murdoch. 'What I demand to know, in exchange for your liberty, is, where the daughter and heiress of Sir Duncan Campbell is now to be found.'

'You will do the maiden no harm ?'

'No : I swear it.'

'And my reward will be life and liberty ?'

'That is our bargain.'

'Then know,' said the Child of the Mist, 'the maiden whom I saved out of compassion when her father's castle was raided, was bred as an adopted daughter of our tribe, until we were beaten by our mortal enemy, Allan M'Aulay of the Boody Hand, aided by Menteith.'

'If she, a reputed daughter of your tribe, fell into the power of Allan of the Bloody Hand, her blood has already stained the dagger.'

'She still survives,' answered the outlaw, 'and is to be found in Angus M'Aulay's castle, under the name of Annot Lyle. I have often heard of her from my kinsmen who have again approached their native woods.'

'If your tale is true,' said Murdoch, 'every promise I have made you shall be kept. But I must speak a few words with your companion in captivity.'

Captain Dalgetty, who had attended to every word of this conversation, waited with caution, but without fear, the commencement of Murdoch's attack.

'Your freedom, Captain Dalgetty,' said Murdoch, depends on your true answers to a few trifling questions respecting the gentlemen you have left : their state of preparation ; the number of their men ; the quality of their arms, and as much as you know about their plan of operations.'

'Just to satisfy your curiosity,' said Dalgetty, 'and without any further purpose ?'

'None in the world,' replied Murdoch ; 'what interest could a poor fellow like me take in their operations ?'

'Put your questions, then,' said the Captain, 'and I will answer.'

'How many Irish are on their way to join the rebel Montrose ?'

'Probably ten thousand,' said Captain Dalgetty.

'Ten thousand !' replied Murdoch, angrily ; 'we know that scarcely two thousand landed.'

'Then you know more about them than I do,' answered Captain Dalgetty with great composure. 'I have not yet seen them assembled.'

'And how many men of the clans are expected ?'

'As many as they can raise.'

'You are answering from the purpose, sir,' said Murdoch. 'Speak plainly : will there be five thousand men ?'

'There and thereabouts,' answered Dalgetty.

'You are playing with your life, sir, if you trifle with me,' replied the inquirer. 'One whistle of mine, and in less than ten minutes your head hangs on the drawbridge.'

'But to speak frankly, Mr. Murdoch,' replied the Captain, 'do you think it is a reasonable thing to ask me the secrets of our army, which I am engaged to serve for the whole campaign ?'

'I tell you, that if you are stubborn, your campaign shall begin and end with a march to the block at the castle-gate : but if you answer my questions faithfully, I will receive you into my—into the service of Argyle.'

'Is his service well paid ?'

'He will double your pay if you will return to Montrose and act under his direction.'

'And is the Marquis of Argyle a kind master, and generous to his officers ?'

No one is kinder, and he has the most open hand in Scotland.'

'Is he faithful to his promises ?' continued Dalgetty.

'As honourable a nobleman as breathes,' said the clansman.

'I never heard so much good of him before,' said Dalgetty; 'you must know the Marquis well—*or rather, you must be the Marquis himself !* Lord of Argyle,' he added, throwing himself suddenly on the disguised nobleman, 'I arrest you, in the name of King Charles, as a traitor. If you venture to call for assistance, I will wring your neck.'

Dalgetty's sudden attack flung Argyle on the floor of the dungeon, where the Captain held him with one hand. while his right, grasping the Marquis's throat, was ready to strangle him on the slightest attempt to call for help.

'Lord of Argyle,' said Dalgetty, 'it is now my turn to lay down terms. If you like to show me the private way by which you entered the dungeon you shall escape, on condition of taking my place, until your warder visits his prisoners. Otherwise, I will strangle you.'

'Villain ! You would not murder me for my kindness ?' murmured Argyle.

'Not for your kindness, my lord,' replied Dalgetty; 'but first, to teach your lordship the proper conduct towards gentlemen who come to you under a truce ; and, secondly, to warn you of the danger of proposing dishonourable terms to an honest soldier.'

'Spare my life,' said Argyle, 'and I will do as you require.'

'Where is the secret door into the dungeon ?' Dalgetty demanded, still keeping a grip on the Marquis's throat.

'Hold up the lantern to the corner on your right hand ; you will find a concealed spring,' replied the Marquis.

'Where does the passage lead to ?'

'Behind the tapestry in my private apartment,' answered

the prostrate nobleman. 'Thence there is a passage through the chapel.'

'You shall give me a passport: are there writing materials in your apartment?'

'Surely; and blank passports ready to be signed,' said the Marquis.

'Then your lordship shall remain under charge of my honest friend, Ranald MacEagh, while I fetch a passport. Honest Ranald, I shall find the means, I do not doubt, of setting you at freedom. Meantime, clap your hand on the windpipe of this high and mighty prince, and if he attempts to struggle or cry out, squeeze hard, my worthy Ranald; if he swoons it is no great matter, since he intended a still harder fate for your throat and mine.'

'If he attempts to speak or struggle,' said Ranald, 'he dies by my hand.'

'That is right, Ranald—very spirited. A thorough-going friend, that understands a hint, is worth a million.'

Dalgetty then pressed the spring, and the secret door flew open. Beyond it, a narrow staircase led upwards through the thickness of the castle wall, and ended behind the tapestry of the Marquis's private apartment.

Finding the room was empty, the Captain entered, and hastily seized a blank passport from the table, and writing materials. He also took the Marquis's dagger, and a silk cord from the wall-hangings.

Captain Dalgetty then descended again, and, listening a moment at the door of the dungeon, heard the half-stifled voice of the Marquis making great offers to MacEagh, if he would allow him to give an alarm.

'Not for a forest of deer—not for a thousand head of cattle,' answered Ranald.

'I thank you, honest Ranald,' said Dalgetty, entering. 'Fill up this passport, my lord, with the names of Major Dugald Dalgetty and his guide, or you are likely to have a passport to another world.'

The Marquis wrote, by the light of the dark lantern, as the soldier bade him.

'And now, Ranald,' said Dalgetty, 'strip off your plaid, and I will muffle the Marquis in it, and make him, for a time, a Child of the Mist. If I wrap it thus about his head, his shouts will be sufficiently muffled. Hold down your hands, my lord, and I will bind them with this silk cord. So, now he is secure till someone comes to relieve him. At what hour, my good Ranald, does the jailer usually appear?'

'Never till the sun is beneath the western wave,' said MacEagh.

'Then, my friend, we shall have three hours' start,' said the cautious Captain.

Dalgetty next unfastened Ranald's chains. The outlaw stretched his stiff arms and bounded from the floor, delighted to recover his freedom.

'Take the coat of the noble prisoner,' said Captain Dalgetty; 'put it on, and follow close at my heels.'

The outlaw obeyed. They ascended the private stair, having first secured the door behind them, and thus safely reached the apartment of the Marquis.

CHAPTER XI

ESCAPE AND PURSUIT

'Look out for a private way through the chapel, Ranald,' whispered the Captain, 'while I give a hasty look to these matters.'

Thus speaking, he seized with one hand a bundle of Argyle's most private papers, and with the other a purse of gold, both of which lay in an open drawer of a rich cabinet. Nor did he neglect to possess himself of a sword, and pistols, with ammunition, which hung in the apartment.

By looking behind the tapestry in various places, the Captain at length discovered a private door, and behind that a winding passage, from which another door opened into the chapel.

Fortunately the chapel service was over and the congregation dispersed. Dalgetty and Ranald passed silently through the chapel, and continued their way along a passage which at last led them to the castle-gate. Dalgetty showed his passport to the sentinels at the drawbridge, while Ranald fetched Gustavus from the stable.

The sentinels, accustomed to the mysterious actions of the Marquis, and supposing that Dalgetty had been entrusted with some private commission by their master, gave him free passage.

Dalgetty rode slowly through the town of Inverary, the outlaw following him like a foot-page at his horse's shoulder. As they passed the gallows the old man looked at the bodies, and wrung his hands in anguish. Recovering himself, he whispered something, in passing, to one of the females who were engaged in watching and mourning the victims. The woman started at his voice, and then nodded slightly in answer.

Dalgetty continued his way out of the town, uncertain whether he should try to obtain a boat and cross the lake, or should plunge into the woods and there conceal himself from pursuit. In the former case, he was likely to be instantly pursued by the Marquis's swift boats, which lay ready for sailing. If he chose the woods, his chance either of supporting or concealing himself in that unknown wilderness was slight. The town lay now behind him, and he began to realize that his desperate escape from the dungeon at Inverary was only the easiest part of a difficult task. If he was retaken, Argyle was certain to punish him with instant death. While he stood undecided, Ranald MacEagh suddenly asked, 'Which way do you intend to journey?'

'Honest comrade,' answered Dalgetty, 'I cannot decide.'

'Let a Son of the Mist be your guide. I will pledge my head for your safety.'

'Can you guide me safely through these mountains, and back to the army of Montrose?'

'I can,' answered MacEagh; 'no man knows the mountain passes, caverns, valleys, thickets, as do the Children of the Mist. While others crawl on the level grounds, we haunt the heights of the inaccessible mountains. Not all the bloodhounds of Argyle can trace the path by which I will guide you.'

'Then, lead on, honest Ranald,' replied Dalgetty.

The outlaw accordingly led the way into the wood, which stretched for several miles from the castle, walking so fast as to keep Gustavus at a good trot, and taking so many twists and turns that Captain Dalgetty quickly lost all idea of where he was. At last the path, which had gradually become more difficult, ended altogether among thickets and underwood. The roaring of a torrent was heard in the neighbourhood; the ground became in some places broken, in others boggy, and everywhere unfit for riding.

'What is to be done here?' said Dalgetty. 'I fear I must part with Gustavus.'

'He shall soon be restored to you,' said the outlaw. As he spoke he whistled, and a lad, dressed in rags, lean and half-starved, with wild grey eyes, crept out, like a wild beast, from a thicket of brambles.

'Give the boy your horse,' said Ranald MacEagh; 'your life depends on it.'

Captain Dalgetty was very unwilling to leave his precious Gustavus in charge of such a groom, but at last dragged himself away in response to Ranald's urgent entreaties.

It was no easy matter for Captain Dalgetty to follow his guide. Their path lay along the course of a torrent,

and was encumbered by huge stones, thickets of brambles, steep rocks, and many other obstacles. The agile and lightly-clad mountaineer surmounted these difficulties with ease and speed; but Captain Dalgetty, impeded by his armour and his heavy boots, became so exhausted that at last he sat down upon a stone, to recover his breath. The mountaineer, however, laid his hand on the soldier's arm, and pointed backwards in the direction of the wind. Dalgetty could see nothing, for evening was closing fast, and they were at the bottom of a dark ravine. But at length he could distinctly hear at a distance the sullen toll of a large bell.

'That must be the alarm,' he said.

'It strikes the hour of your death,' answered Ranald, 'unless you can accompany me a little farther. For every toll of that bell a brave man has yielded up his soul.'

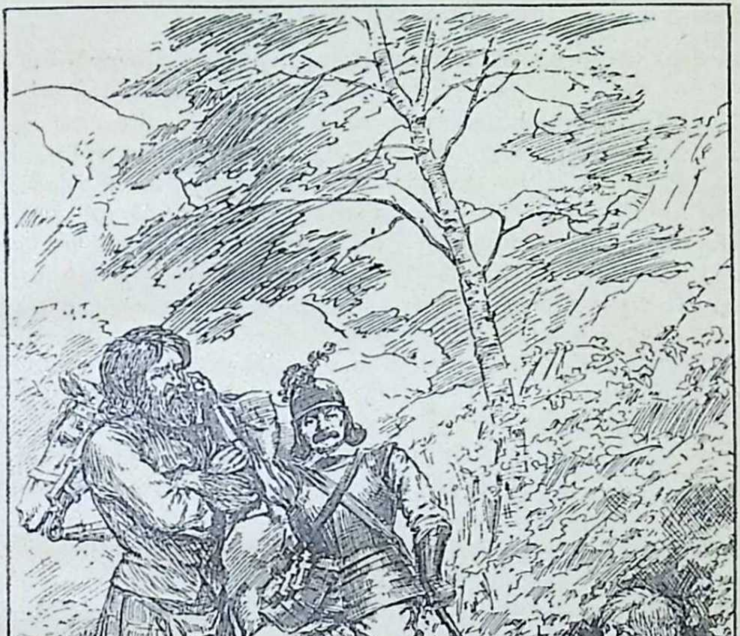
'Truly, Ranald, my trusty friend,' said Dalgetty, 'that may soon be my own case, for I am so exhausted, that I think I had better conceal myself in one of these bushes, and await what fortune shall send. Shift for yourself, my honest Ranald, and leave me to my fate. I do not despair altogether of my safety, Ranald, for I have been in as great straits before, and——'

'If your feet could travel as fast as your tongue,' Ranald interrupted impatiently, 'you might yet save your head.'

'You speak disrespectfully to an officer of rank,' replied the Captain, 'but, as you mean well, I pardon you. Proceed, and I will follow.'

The Son of the Mist again led the way over most difficult and broken ground. Captain Dalgetty, dragging himself along beneath the weight of his armour, and talking incessantly, managed to follow for a considerable distance, when the deep-mouthed baying of a hound was heard coming down the wind, as if the animal scented its prey.

'Black hound,' said Ranald, 'have you already tracked



'GIVE THE BOY YOUR HORSE; YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT'

us ? But you are too late, monster : the deer has reached the herd.'

So saying, he whistled very softly, and was answered from the top of a pass, which they were ascending. Quickening their pace, they reached the top, where the moon, which had now risen bright and clear, showed to Dalgetty a party of ten or twelve Highlanders, and about as many women and children, who by their joyful welcome to Ranald MacEagh showed themselves to be the Children of the Mist. The place they occupied was a steep crag round which wound a narrow footpath, commanded in various places by the position that they held.

Ranald spoke anxiously and hastily to his fellow-tribesmen ; the men shook hands with Dalgetty, while the women pressed round to show their gratitude by kissing the hem of his garment.

'They swear to help you,' said Ranald MacEagh,' in return for the good deed you have done to the tribe to-day.'

'Enough said, Ranald,' answered the soldier. 'Tell them I do not like this shaking of hands and kissing of garments. And so here, I suppose, you intend to make a stand against the pursuers, Ranald ? A very pretty position ! no enemy can come towards it by the road without being at the mercy of cannon and musket. But then, Ranald, you have neither cannon nor musket here !'

'We will make good the pass,' said MacEagh, 'with the weapons and courage of our fathers,' pointing to the bows and arrows with which the men of his party were armed.

'Bows and arrows !' exclaimed Dalgetty ; 'ha ! ha ! ha ! Why, they have not been seen in civilized warfare for a hundred years. But, since we have no other weapons, let us make the best of it. Only, as I do not understand such old-fashioned arms, I must resign the command to you. I will play my part with my pistols in the approaching fight.'

Ranald MacEagh signed to Dalgetty to be silent, by pointing down the pass. The bay of the bloodhound was now approaching closer and closer, and they could also hear the voices of several persons, who shouted to one another as they scattered to search the thickets. They were clearly drawing nearer every moment.

Soon the near cry of the hound announced that the pursuers were at the bottom of the pass. All was dead silence : even Captain Dalgetty held his tongue.

The moon gleamed on the broken pathway, on which the bushes and trees threw dark shadows. Below, a dense wood lay in darkness. From the wood, and close at the bottom of the ascent, the hound was heard at intervals baying fearfully. At times there was deep silence, interrupted only by the sound below ; either the pursuers had not discovered the narrow path that led to the top of the rock, or hesitated before the perils of the ascent.

At length a shadowy figure was seen emerging from the darkness below into the pale moonlight, and beginning cautiously and slowly to ascend the rocky path. Captain Dalgetty could distinguish that the person was a Highlander carrying a long gun.

The pursuer paused half-way up the ascent, and made a signal for those who were still at the bottom to follow him. At that moment an arrow whistled from the bow of one of the Children of the Mist, and pierced the Highlander with so fatal a wound that he fell headlong from the cliff into the darkness below. The crash of the boughs and the heavy sound of his fall were followed by a cry of horror and surprise which burst from his followers. The Children of the Mist replied with a shrill yell of triumph. Even Captain Dalgetty's military prudence did not prevent his rising and calling out to Ranald, 'Comrade, the long bow for ever !'

'The Lowland soldier !' cried a voice from beneath. 'I see the glitter of his breastplate.' At the same time three

muskets were fired, and one ball, striking our valiant Captain in the thigh, stretched him on the ground. Ranald instantly seized the wounded man in his arms, and, bearing him back from the edge of the precipice, delivered him to the care of the females. Ranald was about to return to the contest, when Dalgetty detained him, by grasping his mantle: 'I do not know how this matter will end—but I request you to inform Montrose, that I died like a follower of the immortal Gustavus—and—and——'

Here Dalgetty's breath and eyesight began to fail him through loss of blood, and MacEagh, seizing the opportunity, released from his grasp the end of his own mantle, and substituted that of a female, which the Captain held fast, while he continued to pour out military advice, so long as he had breath and until his senses gave way.

CHAPTER XII

CAMPAIGNS OF MONTROSE

WHILE Captain Dalgetty was experiencing these adventures, Montrose was assembling an army, which soon numbered between two and three thousand Highlanders, besides the Irish troops. This force he placed so as to threaten the town of Perth.

The enemy was also active. Argyle, at the head of an army of Highlanders nearly equal to Montrose's, was pursuing the Irish from the west to the east; and in the Lowlands six thousand infantry, and six or seven thousand cavalry, had been hastily assembled. The Lowlanders, however, were inferior in warlike spirit to Montrose's troops, and were also at a disadvantage, because they had recently exchanged their long spears for muskets, and were not fully trained in the use of their new weapons. Moreover, they had of late years grown accustomed to peace; those who lived near the Highland border had suffered from the

raids of the mountaineers, and those more remote had heard terrible tales of the Highlanders' ferocity. These disadvantages almost counterbalanced the Lowlanders' superiority in numbers.

A battle took place between Montrose's army and the Lowlanders, in which the latter were completely defeated, and lost more than one-third of their number. The victors obtained possession of Perth, and gained considerable supplies of money, arms, and ammunition.

But, in spite of his decisive victory, Montrose found himself in no condition to face the second army with which Argyle was advancing upon him from the west.

In the opinion of the Highland clans which formed Montrose's army, when a battle was over, the campaign was ended: if it was lost, they sought safety in the mountains; if won, they returned there to secure their plunder. At other times they had their cattle to look after, and their harvests to sow or reap, without which their families would have perished from want. In either case, there was an end to their services for the time, though the prospect of fresh adventures and more plunder easily recalled them. The lowland noblemen and gentlemen, who were inclined to the royal cause, were reluctant to join an army which might, after a victory, disperse to the Highlands, and leave them exposed to the vengeance of the enemy.

Montrose, in these circumstances, was forced to retreat rapidly into the Highlands, where he could set pursuit at defiance and recover the recruits who had left him to deposit their spoil in their native strongholds. He alarmed the enemy by successive attacks upon various unexpected points, and spread such general dismay that repeated orders were sent by the Parliament to Argyle to engage and disperse Montrose's forces at all costs.

These commands from his superiors neither suited the haughty spirit nor the cautious policy of Argyle, and, as Montrose's army increased rapidly in numbers, he did not

care to remain in command of that opposed to him. He therefore proceeded to Edinburgh, and resigned his commission, under pretence that his army was not properly supplied with reinforcements and provisions. Thence the Marquis returned to Inverary, there to govern his own territory in full security.

Montrose had now a splendid career in view, provided he could obtain the consent of his troops and their chieftains. The Lowlands lay open before him without an army adequate to check his advance, for Argyle's followers had left the Parliamentary host when their master threw up his commission, and many other troops, tired of the war, had disbanded. Montrose had only to present himself in the Lowlands to arouse the loyalty of the gentlemen to the north of the Forth. The possession of these districts would give him the command of a wealthy part of the kingdom, and would enable him, by regular pay, to place his army on a more permanent footing, to penetrate as far as the capital, and perhaps from there to the Border, where he thought it possible to communicate with the yet unsubdued forces of King Charles.

This plan did not escape the daring spirit of Montrose, but other motives influenced many of his followers.

Almost all the western chiefs in Montrose's army regarded the Marquis of Argyle as the proper object of hostilities. They had felt his power; and, in withdrawing their fighting men from their lands, left their families and property exposed to his vengeance. All were anxious to diminish Argyle's power, and hoped to share in plundering his possessions. To these chiefs, the taking of Inverary and its castle was infinitely more important than the capture of Edinburgh. They argued also that, by crushing Argyle, Montrose would enable his western friends to bring more men to his standard, and would win over several tribes, who were already friendly but were prevented from joining him by fear of Argyle.

Montrose himself felt the most bitter hatred for Argyle: their families had frequently opposed each other in war and politics, and the growth of Argyle's power had aroused the envy and dislike of the rival family.

Montrose, however, persisted in his scheme of making a descent at once into the Lowlands, and held more than one council with the principal chiefs, endeavouring to persuade them. He laid before them the extreme difficulty of marching from the east into Argyleshire, through difficult passes and over wild mountains. The time of year, too, was unfavourable, for the mountains were likely to be rendered impassable by snowstorms. The chiefs, however, insisted that Argyle should be the first object of attack.

The council was dismissed late at night, and without coming to any decision, except that the chiefs promised to find among their followers suitable guides for the expedition.

Montrose had retired to his hut and stretched himself upon a bed of dry fern. He could not sleep, for schemes for the future passed incessantly through his brain.

While he lay thus busied with his thoughts, the sentinel announced that two persons desired to speak with him.

Montrose, who dared not refuse admission to anyone lest they might bring some important information, gave orders to put the guard under arms, and then prepared to receive his untimely visitors. His attendant had scarcely lighted a pair of torches, when two men entered one wearing a lowland dress of leather worn almost to tatters, the other a tall, upright old Highlander, wasted and worn by frost and storm.

'What is your business with me, my friends?' said the Marquis,[1] cautiously placing his hand upon his pistol.

'I beg to congratulate you,' said the Lowlander, 'my most noble general and honourable lord, upon the great battles you have won since I had the honour to be detached

[1] The King had made Montrose a Marquis at Oxford in the spring.

from you. They were pretty affairs; nevertheless, if I might be permitted to advise——'

'Before doing so,' said the Marquis, 'will you please let me know who is so kind as to grant me his opinion?'

'Truly, my lord,' replied the man, 'I hoped it was unnecessary, since it is not long since I accepted the post of Major in your service. I trust your lordship has not forgotten my pay as well as my person.'

'My good Major Dalgetty,' said Montrose, who by this time perfectly recollected his visitor, 'you must consider what important things have happened to put my friends' faces out of my memory, besides this imperfect light. And what news from Argyleshire, my good Major? We have long given you up for lost.'

'It is not due to the Marquis of Argyle's mercy,' said Dalgetty, 'that I now stand before you. My escape is by good fortune, and my own skill. I owe something besides to the assistance of this old Highlander, whom I recommend to your lordship's special favour, as the means of saving Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket.'

'A valuable service,' said the Marquis gravely, 'which shall certainly be rewarded in the manner it deserves.'

'This poor man, my lord,' said Major Dalgetty, 'has strained all his slender means to defend me from my enemies, and also cured me when I received a slight wound in my retreat.'

'What is your name, my friend?' said Montrose, turning to the Highlander.

'It may not be spoken,' answered the mountaineer.

'He means,' said Major Dalgetty, 'that he desires to have his name concealed, as in former days he took a castle, slew some children, and did other things that are often practised in war, but arouse ill-will towards the doer in the friends of those who are injured.'

'I understand,' said Montrose. 'This person is at

feud with some of our followers. Let him retire to the guards' quarters, and we will think of the best way of protecting him.'

When the Highlander had withdrawn, Montrose inquired concerning Dalgetty's embassy to Inverary, and listened with attention to the Major's reply. The latter presently handed to his general the packet of Argyle's private papers that he had taken from the castle at Inverary. Snatching a torch from the wall, Montrose was in an instant deeply occupied in reading the papers, in which he found something to inflame his hatred of his rival Argyle.

'Does he not fear me?' said he; 'then he shall feel me. Will he set fire to my castle? Inverary shall raise the first smoke—oh for a guide to lead me into Argyle's country!'

'If your Excellency wishes to invade Argyleshire,' said the Major, 'this poor man, Ranald, of whom I told you, together with his children and companions, knows every pass into that land.'

'Indeed!' said Montrose. 'How do you know this?'

'My lord,' answered Dalgetty, 'during the weeks that I remained with them for the care of my wound, Argyle made repeated efforts to capture me. To escape the pursuers, my guardians were repeatedly obliged to retreat and advance; and, in doing so, they showed singular knowledge of the country. And when, at length, I was able to join your Excellency's force, this honest, simple creature, Ranald MacEagh, guided me by paths that my horse Gustavus trod with perfect safety.'

'And can you answer for this man's faithfulness?' said Montrose. 'Who and what is he?'

'He is an outlaw and robber by profession,' answered Dalgetty. 'His name is Ranald MacEagh, or Ranald, the Son of the Mist.'

'I remember the name,' said Montrose, pausing. 'Did not these Children of the Mist do some act of cruelty to the M'Aulays?'

Major Dalgetty mentioned the murder of the forester, and Montrose at once recalled all the circumstances of the feud.

'It is most unlucky,' said Montrose, 'this deadly quarrel between these men and the M'Aulays. Allan has borne himself bravely in these wars, and has so much influence over his countrymen that the consequences of displeasing him might be serious. At the same time, these men, being so capable of rendering useful service, and being, as you say, Major Dalgetty, perfectly trustworthy——'

'My lord,' said the Major, 'not only did they disdain to profit by a handsome reward that Argyle placed upon my head; and not only did they refrain from robbing me; and not only did they restore my horse; but I could not persuade them to accept one single coin for the trouble and expenses of my sick bed.'

'Major Dalgetty,' continued Montrose, while his visitor devoured some food that had been brought for him, 'the presence here of the Children of the Mist, and the purpose for which we employ them, must be a secret between you and me.'

The Major, delighted at this mark of his general's confidence, laid his finger upon his nose, and nodded intelligently.

'How many are there of Ranald's followers?' asked the Marquis.

'They are reduced to eight or ten men,' said Dalgetty, 'and a few women and children.'

'Where are they now?'

'In a valley three miles distant, awaiting your Excellency's command.'

'Let Ranald MacEagh select one or two of his followers,' said Montrose, 'men whom he can trust; these, with their chief, shall serve as our guides. Let them be at my tent to-morrow at day-break. Has the old man any children?'

'A dozen of them have been killed or hanged,' answered the Major; 'but he has one grandchild left.'

'Take that boy as an attendant for yourself, Major Dalgetty,' said Montrose: 'he shall be a pledge for the faithfulness of his parent. And now, sir, you may depart for the night; to-morrow you will introduce this MacEagh under any name or disguise he likes to assume.'

Major Dalgetty took his leave with a joyful heart, greatly delighted with the reception he had received, and much pleased with the manner of his new general, which, as he explained at great length to Ranald MacEagh, reminded him in many respects of the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North.

CHAPTER XIII

MONTROSE AT BAY

By break of day Montrose received in his hut old MacEagh, and questioned him carefully as to the means of approaching the country of Argyle. He compared the information he received with that which he was able to collect from the chiefs, and, being satisfied that it was accurate, he resolved to proceed in full reliance upon it.

As Ranald MacEagh was to be placed under Major Dalgetty's protection, it was necessary for the latter to present the old man to those persons with whom he was most likely to associate. Ranald had meanwhile changed his dress for clothing peculiar to the men of the distant isles.

Major Dalgetty, having sought out his old acquaintances, Lord Menteith and the M'Aulays, introduced Ranald MacEagh under an assumed name, as having escaped with him from Argyle's prison. He recommended him as a skilful harper and a gifted seer. While making these remarks Major Dalgetty stammered and hesitated, and Allan

M'Aulay's suspicions must have been aroused, if his whole attention had not been engaged in studying Ranald's features. Presently Allan crossed the floor of the hut, greeted the embarrassed Highlander in a friendly way, and, inviting him to be seated, spoke to him in low tones about his gift of second sight.

Meanwhile, the English nobles, Sir Miles Musgrave and Sir Christopher Hall, entered the hut in the highest possible spirits, and announced to Angus M'Aulay that orders had been issued for all to prepare for an immediate march to the westward.

'If that is the case,' said Angus M'Aulay, 'I must give orders to my followers, and arrange, too, for the safe conveyance of Annot Lyle, for an advance into Argyle's country will be a far and foul journey.' So saying he left the hut.

'Annot Lyle!' repeated Dalgetty. 'Is she following the campaign?'

'Surely,' replied Miles Musgrave, glancing from Lord Menteith to Allan M'Aulay; 'we could not march or fight, advance or retreat, without the influence of the Princess of Harps.'

'And what would you have, gentlemen?' said Allan, turning suddenly from the Highlander with whom he was in conversation; 'would you yourselves have left an innocent girl to die by violence or perish by famine? There is not, by this time, a roof upon my home—our crops have been destroyed, and our cattle driven away.'

The Englishmen readily agreed, and the company dispersed, each man to his own occupation.

Allan lingered behind a moment, still questioning the reluctant Ranald MacEagh concerning a vision which greatly perplexed him. 'Repeatedly,' he said, 'I have seen, in a vision, a Highlander plunging his weapon into the body of Menteith, but by no effort can I discover the assailant's face.'

'Your own hand,' said Ranald, 'will do the deed of which you have seen the shadow.'

'It is impossible,' replied Allan. 'We are bound by the ties of blood: we have stood side by side in battle. It is IMPOSSIBLE I should harm him!'

'That you WILL do so,' answered Ranald, 'is certain.'

'It is false,' said M'Aulay, starting up and striding out of the hut.

'The arrow is in your side,' said the Son of the Mist, looking after him with an air of triumph. 'Soon shall your murderers' swords be dyed in each other's blood!'

On the next morning all was ready, and Montrose advanced westward by rapid marches. He first took by surprise an outlying clan, kinsmen of Argyle, and ravaged their flocks and herds.

Advancing in this manner, and laying waste the country around him, Montrose reached the most difficult part of his enterprise. There was no road or path through the extensive wilds that faced him; and, to add to the difficulty, the mountains were already covered with snow. They were piled in great masses, one upon another, the front rank dazzlingly white, while those which arose behind them caught a rosy tint from the setting of a clear wintry sun.

The followers of Montrose were men not to be daunted by the terrible prospect before them. Plunder and revenge lay beyond the frozen mountains, and they did not permit themselves to be daunted by the difficulty of traversing them. To cheer their spirits, Montrose ordered the pipers to play; the troops advanced eagerly, and soon entered a dangerous pass, through which Ranald guided them.

The victorious army of Montrose, whose deeds had struck terror into all Scotland, appeared a contemptible handful of stragglers when ascending this terrific pass: the jaws of the mountain seemed ready to close upon them and devour them. Even Montrose half repented the boldness of his attempt, as he looked upon his scattered troops.

The difficulty of getting forward was so great that considerable gaps began to occur in the line. Montrose looked anxiously at every point of advantage that the hill afforded, dreading that it might be occupied by the enemy. But the people of Argyleshire were so confident that no enemy could enter their country that they had made no preparation to repel an invading army.

Montrose's troops no sooner reached the summit of the ridge of hills bounding Argyleshire than they rushed down upon the valleys beneath them with wild fury.

The army was divided into three bodies, to produce more widespread terror, and penetrated the country of Argyle at three different points. There was no resistance. The clansmen, wherever they assembled, were disarmed, dispersed, or killed. Major Dalgetty, who had been sent forward with a few horsemen against Inverary, very nearly captured the Marquis of Argyle, who only escaped by rapid flight by water. But the punishment that Argyle himself escaped fell heavily upon his country and clan.

Argyle fled to Edinburgh, to lay his complaints before the Parliament, who raised a considerable army. Argyle also collected his own numerous forces, joined the Parliamentary army, and prepared to march with it into Argyleshire, to chastise the invaders.

While these two formidable armies were uniting, Montrose was threatened by a third force, collected in the north by the supporters of the Parliament. He was now enclosed in a wasted and unfriendly country, and was threatened on each side by advancing enemies of superior force. His destruction seemed certain, but, as if by magic, he collected his scattered troops, suddenly disappeared from Argyleshire, and retreated into the wild northern mountains.

Argyle and the Parliamentary leaders united with him immediately guessed that it was Montrose's purpose to destroy the Parliament's forces in the north, before they could come to their assistance. They therefore again

separated their armies. Argyle undertook to follow Montrose's line of march, while the other force moved north-eastwards, to intercept Montrose if he attempted to escape in that direction.

Argyle's march led him once more towards Inverary, and he saw with grief and anger the ravages that the hostile clans had inflicted on his dependents and country. Hundreds flocked to his banner, hoping for revenge and plunder, and Argyle soon found himself at the head of three thousand determined men. The principal command under Argyle was held by Sir Duncan Campbell.

The chieftains were eager to attack Montrose, with their increased force; but the cautious Marquis determined to follow his enemy in whatever direction he marched, avoiding battle until an opportunity occurred of falling upon Montrose's rear, while he was engaged with another enemy in front.

Montrose, avoiding the ordinary paths, led his army like a herd of wild deer from mountain to mountain, and from forest to forest, where his enemies could learn nothing of his movements, while he obtained the most perfect knowledge regarding theirs from the friendly clans through whose mountainous districts he was now passing. Strict orders had been given that Argyle's advance should be watched, and that all information regarding his movements should be brought instantly to the general himself.

It was a moonlight night, and Montrose, worn out by the fatigues of the day, was sleeping in a miserable shed. He had only slumbered two hours, when someone touched his shoulder. He looked up, and recognized one of the principal chiefs of his army.

'I have news for you,' said that leader. 'Argyle is moving upon Inverlochy with three thousand chosen men. The news is certain.'

Montrose called for light, and easily learnt that, a great

part of his followers having, as usual, dispersed to secure their spoil, he had not with him more than twelve hundred men at most.

'Not much more than a third,' said Montrose, pausing, 'of Argyle's force, and Highlanders opposed to Highlanders. If the odds were only one to two, I would not hesitate.'

'Then do not hesitate,' answered the chieftain; 'for when your trumpet shall sound to attack Argyle, not a man of these glens will remain deaf to the summons. To-morrow or the next day shall be a battle to all the clansmen.'

'It is gallantly spoken, my noble friend,' said Montrose. 'We will turn back on Argyle, who follows us like a raven to devour the remains of our army, in case we meet braver men who may be able to break its strength! Let the chiefs and leaders be called together as quickly as possible. You yourself shall guide us by the best and nearest road against our enemy.'

'I will willingly do that,' answered the other.

A general bustle now prevailed, and the leaders were roused from their rough resting-places.

'I never thought,' said Major Dalgetty, when summoned up from a handful of rough heather-roots, 'to have parted so unwillingly from a bed as hard as a broom.' So saying, he made his way to the council, where he joyfully agreed to Montrose's proposal of marching back and facing Argyle.

The local chieftains dispatched messengers to summon every man who could bear arms to join the King's forces as they marched towards Inverlochy. The order was speedily and willingly obeyed, and all in the neighbourhood who were able to carry arms flocked to Montrose's standard. By the time the army approached the enemy they found their strength increased considerably more than one-fourth.

Meantime Argyle had reached the ancient castle of Inverlochy, and there took up his headquarters, encamping his army in the valley, where a river joined the lake on

which the castle stood. Several barges attended them, loaded with provisions.

Argyle, in council with Sir Duncan Campbell, expressed his full confidence that Montrose was now on the brink of destruction. He was aware of Montrose's approach, and agreed that, as Montrose moved eastward, his troops would diminish, and that if he turned either to the north or to the west he would encounter the Parliamentary forces. If he halted, he would expose himself to the attack of all three armies at once.

'Reports have reached our outposts,' replied Sir Duncan, 'that the clansmen to our front are assembling their full strength: this must be to join the advance of Montrose, and not to cover his retreat.'

'They can intend no more than attack on our outposts,' said Argyle, 'or to annoy us on our march to-morrow.'

'I have sent out scouts,' said Sir Duncan. 'We must soon hear whether they really are assembling in force, in what place, and for what purpose.'

It was late before any tidings were received, but when the moon had risen, a considerable bustle took place in the camp. Sir Duncan Campbell's scouts had been taken or slain by the enemy. On the rapid advance of Montrose's army, his advanced guard and the outposts of Argyle became aware of each other's presence, and, after exchanging a few shots, fell back to their respective main bodies, to carry information and receive orders.

Sir Duncan Campbell instantly threw himself on horseback in order to visit the outposts, while Argyle arranged his forces in the plain, as it was evident they might now expect a night alarm, or an attack in the morning at latest.

Montrose had kept his forces so cautiously within the mountain passes, that Argyle was unable to discover his strength, although he learnt, through his spies, that it was inferior to his own. Argyle still refused to believe that Montrose was present himself. 'It is a madness,'

he said, 'of which even he is incapable. Probably some of the clans have assembled to hinder our march, and we shall easily disperse them.'

The spirit of Argyle's followers was high, for they were eager to avenge the disasters that their country had so recently undergone. The night passed in anxious hopes that the morning would dawn upon their vengeance. The outposts of each army kept careful watch, and Argyle's soldiers slept in the order of battle that they were next day to occupy.

A pale dawn had scarcely begun to dye the tops of the immense mountains when the leaders of both armies prepared for action. The clansmen of Argyle were arranged in two lines, not far from the angle between the river and the lake, and made a formidable appearance. Argyle preferred receiving the attack to making it, and signals were soon heard that he would not have long to wait, for the war-tunes of various clans advancing from the mountains to the attack could already be distinguished.

'You see,' said Argyle to his kinman, 'it is as I said: we have only to deal with our neighbours; Montrose has not ventured to show his banner.'

At this moment there resounded from the pass a lively flourish of trumpets, in that note with which it was the ancient Scottish fashion to salute the royal standard.

'You may hear, my lord, from that signal,' said Sir Duncan Campbell, 'that Montrose must be in person among these men.'

'And has probably horsemen with him,' said another chief. 'But shall we look pale for that, my lord, when we have foes to fight, and wrongs to avenge?'

Argyle was silent, and looked at his arm, which hung in a sling, owing to a fall, during the recent march.

'It is true,' interrupted Sir Duncan eagerly, 'my lord of Argyle, you are disabled from using sword or pistol; you must retire on board the boats. Your life is precious

to us as a head: your hand cannot be useful to us as a soldier.'

'No,' said Argyle, proud but irresolute, 'it shall never be said that I fled before Montrose; if I cannot fight, I will at least die in the midst of my children.'

Several other principal chiefs, with one voice, implored their chieftain to leave them for that day to the leading of Sir Duncan Campbell, and to watch the conflict from a distance and in safety, and at last Argyle was persuaded.

'See him on board, if you will,' said Sir Duncan to one of the chiefs; 'it must be my duty to prevent this spirit from spreading further among us.'

So saying, he threw himself among the ranks, encouraging the soldiers and imparting to their bosoms some of the fire that glowed in his own.

Slowly, meanwhile, and apparently with reluctance, Argyle suffered himself to be forced on board ship, whence he watched with more safety than credit the scene that followed.

Sir Duncan Campbell, when he saw his chieftain retiring from the field of battle, suffered bitter anguish. 'It is better it should be so,' he said to himself; 'but, of his line of a hundred ancestors, I do not know one who would have retired while the banner of their foes waved in the wind.'

A loud shout compelled him to turn, and to hasten to his post on the right flank of the army. The retreat of Argyle had been observed by his watchful enemy, who from their high ground could see everything below, and observed three or four horsemen moving to the rear.

'They are saving their precious chief,' said Montrose to Major Dalgetty with a bitter smile. 'Give the signal for attack instantly! Send the word through the ranks! Gentlemen, noble chiefs, upon them instantly! Ride to the horsemen, Major Dalgetty, and bid them charge! The Irish shall be placed as a reserve.'

CHAPTER XIV

VICTORY

The trumpets at once gave the signal for attack, which was answered by the cry of more than two thousand warriors, and the echoes of the mountains behind them.

The Highland followers of Montrose, divided into three columns, poured from the passes that had hitherto concealed them from their enemies, and rushed with the utmost determination upon the foe, who awaited their charge with the greatest firmness.

Behind these charging columns the Irish marched, intended to form a reserve. With them was the royal standard, and Montrose himself; and on the flanks were about fifty horsemen under Dalgetty. The centre column of the Royalists was led by the Earl of Menteith.

The Highlanders poured on, firing their guns and discharging their arrows at a little distance from the enemy, who received the attack with the most determined gallantry. Argyle's followers were better armed than Montrose's, and, as they remained still, their aim was more certain: in consequence, their fire dealt more destruction than they suffered. The Royalist clans, perceiving this, rushed to close quarters, and succeeded at two points in throwing their enemies into disorder.

The struggle was desperate; and the clash of swords and axes was mixed with the wild shrieks of the Highlanders. Neither party would retreat an inch, while the place of those who fell was eagerly filled by others, who thronged to the front of danger.

The fight stood thus at the Royalists' right and centre, with no immediate result, except mutual wounds and death.

On the right of Argyle's troops Sir Duncan Campbell obtained some advantage, through his military skill and by strength of numbers, but the advance of the Irish reserve compelled him to withdraw.

The Marquis of Montrose, in the meanwhile, called upon Dalgetty to follow him with his horsemen, and, concealed by some trees and the smoke of the battle, moved to the right flank of the enemy, where he commanded his six trumpeters to sound the charge.

The clang of the cavalry trumpets and the noise of the galloping horses spread panic in Argyle's right wing; and the dismay, in spite of Sir Duncan's efforts to stop it, soon became universal.

The Royalists returned to the charge, and the Irish maintained a destructive fire, until Argyle's followers began to fly.

Sir Duncan Campbell, with two or three hundred gallant gentlemen, endeavoured vainly to cover the retreat of the troops. They were charged again and again by fresh foes, and separated from one another, until at last it only remained for them to purchase an honourable death by resisting to the last.

'Surrender, Sir Duncan,' called out Major Dalgetty, when he discovered his late host, with one or two others, defending himself against several Highlanders. To enforce his order, he rode up to him with his sword raised. Sir Duncan's reply was to fire his pistol; the shot took no effect on the rider, but his gallant horse, struck through the heart, fell dead under him.

Ranald MacEagh, who was one of those who had been pressing Sir Duncan hard, took the opportunity to cut him down with his sword, as he turned from him in the act of firing his pistol.

Allan M'Aulay came up at this moment. 'Villains!' he said, 'which of you has dared to do this, when it was my positive order that Sir Duncan Campbell should be taken alive?'

Several voices were raised to lay the blame on Ranald MacEagh.

'Dog!' said Allan, 'follow the chase and harm him no

further, unless you mean to die by my hand.' They were at this moment almost alone; for Allan's threats had driven his own clan from the spot, and all around had pressed on in pursuit of the enemy. The moment tempted MacEagh's revengeful spirit. 'It is not more likely,' said he, answering Allan's threat in a tone as menacing, 'that I shall die by your hand, red as it is with the blood of my kinsmen, than that you shall fall by mine.' With that he struck at M'Aulay so suddenly that Allan had scarcely time to stop the blow with his shield.

'Villain!' said Allan in astonishment. 'What does this mean?'

'I am Ranald of the Mist!' answered the other, repeating the blow: and, with that word, they engaged in close and furious conflict.

After they had exchanged a few blows, Ranald MacEagh was laid low by a deep wound on the skull; and M'Aulay was about to pass his sword through his body, when the point of the weapon was struck up by Major Dalgetty, recovered from his fall. 'Hold up your sword,' said he to M'Aulay; 'this person is under my protection, and in his Excellency's service.'

'Fool!' said Allan, 'stand aside! Do not dare to come between the tiger and his prey!'

But Dalgetty stepped across the fallen MacEagh. 'If you are a tiger,' he said to Allan, 'you will find me a lion in your path!'

Allan's rage was now turned upon Dalgetty, and blows were exchanged between them.

Fortunately Montrose observed the quarrel, and, forcing his horse to the spot, cried, 'For shame, gentlemen! are you quarrelling together on this glorious field of victory? Are you mad? Are you drunk with the glory that you have both gained to-day?'

'It is not my fault, your Excellency,' said Dalgetty. 'He touched a man who was under my protection.'

'And he,' said Allan, speaking at the same time, 'dared to bar the course of my just vengeance.'

'For shame, gentlemen!' repeated Montrose. 'I have more important business for you both than any private quarrel, which you can easily find a more fitting time to settle. For you, Major Dalgetty, kneel down in the name of King Charles and of his representative.'

When Dalgetty obeyed, Montrose struck him lightly on the neck with the flat of his sword, saying: 'In reward for your gallant services to-day, and in the name of your sovereign, King Charles, I create you knight: be brave, loyal, and fortunate. And now, Sir Dugald Dalgetty, to your duty. Collect as many horsemen as you can, and pursue the enemy down the side of the lake. Mount, Sir Dugald, and do your duty.'

'But what shall I mount?' said the new knight. 'Poor Gustavus sleeps in the bed of honour.'

'I make you a present of my own horse,' answered Montrose, dismounting.

With many thanks for the generous gift, Sir Dugald mounted Montrose's horse, and, begging his Excellency to remember that MacEagh was under his protection, set off to execute the orders given him.

'And you, Allan M'Aulay,' said Montrose, addressing the Highlander, who, leaning his sword-point on the ground, had watched the knighting of Major Dalgetty with a sneer of sullen scorn, 'you, who are above caring for plunder and pay and personal distinction—you, whose deep knowledge makes you so valuable a counsellor—is it you whom I find striving with a man like Dalgetty for the privilege of trampling the remains of life out of so contemptible an enemy as lies here? Come, my friend, I have other work for you. This victory may win to our party some of the leaders of the other Parliamentary forces, induced to take arms against us only by despair of our cause, not by disloyalty. I shall send you to them, for your high

rank and your talents will have great influence. Moreover, you know every pass in the Highlands, as well as the customs of every tribe. Go, then, and perform this service for the King.'

Allan M'Aulay directed a piercing glance at the Marquis, as if to discover whether this sudden mission was given him for some secret purpose; but Montrose's face revealed nothing. The latter did, in fact, consider it of the greatest importance to remove the hot-tempered Allan from the camp for a few days, that he might provide for the safety of those who had acted as his guides. He trusted that Allan's quarrel with Dalgetty might be easily made up afterwards.

Allan, at parting, only recommended Sir Duncan Campbell to the Marquis's care. Montrose instantly directed that the wounded knight should be conveyed to a place of safety, and entrusted MacEagh to the care of a party of the Irish.

The Marquis then mounted a horse, and rode on to view the scene of his victory. Of Argyle's gallant army of three thousand men, fully one half fell in the battle, or in the flight. Several hundreds had been forced into the lake and drowned. Of the survivors, about one half escaped by swimming the river, or by an early flight along the shore of the lake. The remainder threw themselves into the castle of Inverlochy, but were obliged to surrender. Arms, ammunition, standards, and baggage, all became the spoil of the conquerors.

This was the greatest disaster that ever befell the Campbells. Of the slain, nearly five hundred were gentlemen of respected houses. And, in the opinion of many of the clan, even the heavy loss was exceeded by the disgrace arising from the inglorious conduct of their chief, the Marquis of Argyle, whose boat sailed down the lake, when the day was lost, with all possible speed.

CHAPTER XV

A SECRET IS REVEALED

MONTROSE's splendid success over his powerful rival was not won without loss. The obstinate valour of the Campbells cost the lives of many brave men, and more were wounded, the chief of whom was the brave young Earl of Menteith, who had commanded the centre. He was, however, only slightly touched, and was able to present to his general the standard of Argyle, which he had captured with his own hand.

Montrose dearly loved Menteith, and clasped him to his breast as he exclaimed, 'My gallant kinsman!' By this heartfelt applause Menteith was thrilled with a warmer glow of delight than if his actions had been reported direct to his sovereign.

'Nothing,' he said, 'my lord, now seems to remain in which I can give any assistance. Permit me to look after Sir Duncan Campbell, who, I am told, is our prisoner and severely wounded.'

Montrose gave permission, but asked Menteith first to tell him when he had last seen Annot Lyle.

The young Earl coloured deeply, and answered, 'Not since last evening—excepting,' he added, with hesitation, 'for one moment, about half an hour before the battle began.'

'My dear Menteith,' said Montrose very kindly, 'this poor girl is exquisitely beautiful, and has talents fit to enchant you. But she is not your equal in birth. You *cannot* think of marrying her.'

'My lord,' replied Menteith, 'you are joking. Annot Lyle is of unknown birth—a captive—the daughter, probably, of some obscure outlaw; a dependent on the hospitality of the M'Aulays.'

'Do not be angry, Menteith,' said the Marquis, interrupting him. 'I am seriously anxious about this. Your

feelings and those of Annot Lyle are not alone interested: you have a dangerous rival in Allan M'Aulay, and there is no knowing to what extent he may carry his resentment. It is my duty to tell you that the King's service may be much harmed by quarrels between you.'

'My lord,' said Menteith, 'I know your intention is kind; I hope you will be satisfied when I assure you that Allan M'Aulay and I have discussed this matter, and that I have explained to him that Annot Lyle's obscure birth prevents my thinking of marriage with her. I will confess to your lordship, what I have already confessed to M'Aulay, that if Annot Lyle was a lady by birth, she should share my name and rank; as matters stand, it is impossible.'

Montrose shrugged his shoulders. 'And you have agreed,' he said, 'that you are both to worship the same maiden, and that neither shall marry her?'

'I did not go so far, my lord,' answered Menteith: 'I only said, in the present circumstances—and there is no prospect of their being changed—I could not marry Annot Lyle, in duty to myself, and my family.'

'Menteith,' said Montrose, 'I am sorry for you.'

So saying, he shook hands with his noble kinsman, and walked away towards the castle.

Annot Lyle, as was not unusual for females in the Highlands, possessed some medical skill, and her services had been extremely useful during this wild campaign. She was now in an apartment of the castle, busied in her work of healing, when Allan M'Aulay suddenly entered. She started, for she had heard that he had left the camp upon a distant mission; and, moreover, his face seemed at present to have even a darker shade of gloom than usual. He stood before her perfectly silent.

'I thought,' she said with an effort, 'you had already set out.'

'My companion awaits me,' said Allan. 'I go instantly.' Yet he still stood before her, holding her by the arm.

'Shall I take the harp?' she said in a timid voice; 'is the shadow falling upon you?'

Instead of replying he led her to the window, from which could be seen the field of the slain, with all its horrors.

'It is a hideous sight,' said Annot, covering her eyes with her hands.

'You must grow accustomed to it,' said Allan. 'You will soon have to search such a field for my brother's corpse—for Menteith's—for mine—but that will hardly distress you. You do not love me!'

'This is the first time you have accused me of unkindness,' said Annot, weeping. 'You are my brother—my preserver—my protector—how can I not love you?'

'You do not love me, Annot,' said Allan, still holding her fast. 'You love Menteith, who loves you. Allan is no more to you than one of the corpses scattered on that field.'

Annot Lyle knew it was true that she loved Menteith more than Allan, and she now feared that the discovery might lead the latter to violence.

'You know who I am,' she said, 'and how impossible it is that Menteith or you can be more than friends to me. You know to what unhappy race I probably belong.'

'I will not believe it,' said Allan vehemently. 'I know the doubt as to your birth places a bar between us—but I know also that it does not divide you inseparably from Menteith. Hear me, my beloved Annot! Go with me, and I will place you under the care of some noble Highland lady.'

'I will remain here, Allan,' replied Annot, 'under the protection of Montrose.'

Allan stood as if uncertain whether to give way to sympathy with her distress or anger at her resistance.

'Annot,' he said sternly, 'you rejoice at my departure, which removes a spy upon your intercourse with Menteith. But beware, both of you; for Allan M'Aulay exacts tenfold vengeance for every injury offered to him.'

So saying, he pressed her arm and strode out of the apartment.

Allan M'Aulay's declaration of love and jealousy seemed to Annot Lyle to have opened around her a terrible gulf: she tottered on the very brink of destruction, deprived of every refuge and of all human assistance. She had long known that she loved Menteith more dearly than a brother, but her affection was of a gentle, timid kind. She had intended to nurse in secret her tenderness for Menteith, without seeking any return from him. Allan's furious declaration had now destroyed this plan. Long before this she had dreaded Allan, in spite of the gratitude she felt towards him; but now she regarded him with terror. In many respects his disposition was noble, but he had never been known to resist his wilful passion. He was treated in the house and country of his family like a tamed lion, whom no one dared to oppose, lest they should awaken his natural vehemence of passion.

Annot had little time to dwell upon her fears, being interrupted by the entrance of Sir Dugald Dalgetty, who came to ask her to visit Sir Duncan Campbell and to bring some medicine for his wound.

Annot Lyle did not linger, but hastened to lose the sense of her own sorrow for a time in the attempt to be useful to the wounded chief.

In the chamber of her patient she found, to her surprise, Lord Menteith. She could not help blushing deeply at the meeting; but, to hide her confusion, proceeded instantly to examine Sir Duncan's wound, and easily saw that it was beyond her skill to cure it.

Sir Dugald, meanwhile, returned to a large outhouse, on the floor of which, among the wounded men, lay Ranald of the Mist.

'My old friend,' said Dalgetty, 'I would willingly do anything to please you, in return for the wound you received while under my protection. I have therefore, according

to your earnest request, sent Annot Lyle to attend to Sir Duncan Campbell's wound, though I cannot imagine how that will benefit you. I think you once spoke to me of some blood relationship between them.'

'It is in your power,' said Ranald, 'to grant me one more favour. Carry me into the room where Annot Lyle is in attendance upon Sir Duncan Campbell. I have something to say of the utmost importance to them both.'

'It is unusual,' said Dalgetty, 'to carry a wounded outlaw into the presence of a knight; nevertheless, as the favour you ask is so slight, I will not refuse your request.' So saying, he ordered six men to carry MacEagh on their shoulders to Sir Duncan Campbell's apartment, and himself hastened on in front to announce the cause of his being brought.

The active soldiers followed close at Sir Dugald's heels, and, entering with their ghastly burden, laid MacEagh on the floor of the apartment. His features, naturally wild, were now distorted by pain, while his hands and scanty garments were stained with blood.

'Are you,' he said, raising his head painfully towards the couch where his late opponent lay stretched, 'he whom men call Sir Duncan Campbell?'

'I am,' replied the other. 'What do you want with one whose hours are now numbered?'

'My hours are reduced to minutes,' said the outlaw, 'but I wish to spend them in the service of one whose hand has always been against me, as mine has been raised higher against him.'

'Yours higher against me! Crushed worm!' said Sir Duncan scornfully.

'Yes,' answered the outlaw in a firm voice, 'my arm has been the higher. In the deadly contest between us, the wounds I have dealt have been the deeper. I am Ranald of the Mist! The night that I gave your castle to the winds in one huge blaze of fire is now matched with the day in which you have fallen under my sword. Remember the

injuries you have done our tribe—never were such inflicted, except by *one* besides you. He, they say, is secured by fate against our vengeance—a short time will show.'

'My Lord Menteith,' said Sir Duncan, raising himself out of his bed, 'this is a proclaimed villain, at once the enemy of King and Parliament, of God and man—one of the outlaw robbers of the Mist; the enemy of your house, of the M'Aulays', and of mine. I trust you will not allow moments that are perhaps my last to be embittered by his barbarous triumph.'

Menteith gave orders for Ranald to be instantly removed, but Sir Dugald protested. Their dispute, however, was drowned by the high, harsh tones of the outlaw.

'Hang me on the gallows,' he said, 'to wither between heaven and earth; so shall these haughty chiefs never learn the secret I alone can reveal—a secret that would make Sir Duncan Campbell's heart leap with joy, even in his death agony, and that the Earl of Menteith would purchase at the price of his broad estates. Come hither, Annot Lyle,' he said, raising himself with unexpected strength, 'fear not the sight of him to whom you clung in infancy. Tell these proud men, who disdain you as the issue of my ancient race, that you are no blood of ours, no daughter of the race of the Mist, but born in halls as lordly as their proudest palaces.'

'In the name of God,' said Menteith, trembling with emotion, 'if you know anything of the birth of this lady, reveal the secret before you depart from this world!'

'What would you give, Sir Duncan Campbell,' said MacEagh, turning towards the wounded knight, 'to know that a descendant of your house still remains?'

'If you are telling the truth,' said Sir Duncan, his voice struggling between the emotions of doubt, hatred, and anxiety, 'I could almost forgive you the injuries you have done me.'

'And you, my Lord Menteith,' said Ranald, 'the report of the camp says that you would purchase with life

and lands the news that Annot Lyle is no outlaw's daughter, but of a race as noble as your own. Well—Annot Lyle is the youngest, the sole surviving child of Sir Duncan Campbell; she alone was saved when all others in his halls were given to blood and ashes.'

'Can this man speak truth?' said Annot Lyle, scarcely knowing what she said: 'or is this some strange delusion?'

'Maiden,' replied Ranald, 'I will produce such proofs of what I have spoken as will convince any who doubt. Meantime, withdraw: I loved you as an infant, and for you only have I some regret for what is soon to follow. But he who would avenge himself on his foe must not relent, even if the innocent are involved in the ruin.'

'His advice is good, Annot,' said Lord Menteith. 'For God's sake retire.'

'I will not part from my father, if I have found one!' said Annot.

'And a father you shall always find in me,' murmured Sir Duncan.

'Then,' said Menteith, 'I will have MacEagh removed into an adjoining room, and will collect the evidence of his tale myself. Sir Dugald Dalgetty will assist me.'

'With pleasure, my lord,' answered Sir Dugald; 'no one is better fitted, for I heard the whole story a month ago at Inverary castle, but had forgotten it.'

Lord Menteith and Dalgetty then left the apartment with the wounded man.

CHAPTER XVI

MENTEITH'S SUCCESS

The Earl of Menteith proceeded to investigate more closely the story told by Ranald of the Mist, which was supported by the examination of his two followers, who had assisted as guides. Their statements Menteith carefully compared with such details concerning the destruction

of the castle and family as Sir Duncan Campbell was able to supply. The declarations of the Children of the Mist were simple, accurate, and in all respects consistent with one another. A mark was referred to, which was known to have been borne by the infant child of Sir Duncan, and which appeared upon the left shoulder of Annot Lyle. It was also well remembered that, when the miserable remains of the other children were collected, those of the infant had nowhere been found.

Further evidence convinced Menteith and Montrose that in Annot Lyle, a humble dependent, distinguished only by beauty and talent, they were in future to respect Sir Duncan Campbell's heiress.

The outlaw, meanwhile, asked to speak with his grandchild, Kenneth. The young savage was found lurking in a corner, coiled up among some rotten straw, and was brought to his grandparent.

'Kenneth,' said the old outlaw, 'hear my last words. Allan of the Red Hand left this camp a few hours ago, travelling northwards. Pursue him as the bloodhound pursues the hurt deer—swim the lake—climb the mountain—break through the forest—do not halt until you join him.'

The lad's face darkened as his grandfather spoke, and he laid his hand upon his knife.

'No!' said the old man; 'it is not by your hand he must fall. He will ask the news from the camp—say to him that Annot Lyle of the harp is discovered to be the daughter of Sir Duncan Campbell; that the Earl of Menteith is to marry her; and that you are sent to call guests to the wedding. Do not wait for his answer, but vanish like the lightning when the black cloud swallows it. And now, depart, beloved son of my best beloved! I shall never more see your face, nor hear the light sound of your footstep—yet stay an instant, and hear my last commands. Live free—reward kindness—avenge the injuries of your race!'

The young savage stooped and kissed the brow of the dying outlaw. He was soon far beyond the limits of Montrose's camp.

When Kenneth had departed, Ranald asked Sir Dugald Dalgetty, who had entered the room, to raise him so that he might obtain a view from the window of the castle. The deep frost mist, that had long settled upon the top of the mountains, was now rolling down each rugged valley. 'Spirit of the Mist!' said Ranald MacEagh, 'receive into your clouds, when this pang is over, him whom in life you have so often sheltered.' So saying, he sank back into the arms of those who upheld him, spoke no more, but turned his face to the wall for a time.

Presently the dying man addressed Sir Dugald Dalgetty. 'I die contented,' he said. 'On my foe, who has the blood dearest to me upon his hands—on this man I have now bestowed agony of mind, jealousy, despair, and sudden death—or a life more miserable than death itself. Such shall be the lot of Allan of the Red Hand, when he learns that Annot weds Menteith; and I ask no more than the certainty that it is so, to sweeten my own bloody end by his hand.'

Soon after the Son of the Mist breathed his last.

Menteith, in the meanwhile, leaving Annot with her newly-found father, was eagerly discussing with Montrose the consequences of the discovery.

'I now see plainly,' said the Marquis, 'that your interest in this discovery, my dear Menteith, is largely concerned with your own happiness. You love this newly-found lady—your affection is returned. As regards her birth, no objection can be made; in every other respect, her advantages are equal to your own. Think, however, a moment. Sir Duncan is a fanatic, in arms against the King; he is only with us as a prisoner, and we are, I fear, at the commencement of a long civil war. Do you think, Menteith, this is the time for you to make proposals for



'AVENGE THE INJURIES OF YOUR RACE'

his heiress? or what chance is there that he will now listen to them?'

The young nobleman eagerly found a thousand answers to these objections. Among other arguments, he urged his own proved zeal for the royal cause, and hinted that its influence might be extended by his marrying Sir Duncan's heiress. He pleaded, also, there was a risk in allowing the young lady to be carried into her father's country, where, in case of his death, she would be placed under the guardianship of Argyle: this would be fatal to his own hopes.

Montrose allowed the force of these arguments, and owned that, though the matter was difficult, it seemed advantageous to the King's service to conclude it as speedily as possible.

'I should like,' he said, 'to settle it all in one way or another, and to remove this fair lady from our camp before the return of Allan M'Aulay. I fear a fatal quarrel, Menteith, and I believe it would be best for Sir Duncan to be dismissed on parole, and for you to accompany him and his daughter as his escort.'

'Never!' said Menteith. 'Not even for the hope that has so lately dawned on me will I leave your Excellency's camp while the royal standard is flying, and at this crisis of the King's affairs.'

'Then, if you are so determined,' said Montrose, 'you must lose no time in speaking with Sir Duncan Campbell. If your interview proves favourable, I will talk myself with the elder M'Aulay, and we will manage to employ his brother at a distance from the army, until he recovers from his disappointment.'

They parted; and Menteith, early on the following morning, sought a private interview with the wounded Sir Duncan, and informed him that he was a suitor for his daughter's hand. Sir Duncan was aware of their mutual attachment, but he was not prepared for so early a

declaration from Menteith. He asked for a few hours to consult with his daughter.

The result was favourable to Menteith. Sir Duncan Campbell saw that the happiness of his daughter depended upon marriage with her lover; and Menteith's high character, his rank and fortune, outbalanced, in Sir Duncan's opinion, the difference in their political views.

Sir Duncan, therefore, announced to the lovers his consent that they should be married in the chapel of the castle, as privately as possible. But it was agreed that when Montrose left Inverlochy, as he would probably do in the course of a few days, the young countess should depart with her father to his castle, and remain there until Menteith could retire with honour from his present military employment. It was decided that the wedding should take place the next evening, being the second after the battle.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

MONTROSE communicated to Angus M'Aulay, so long the kind protector of Annot Lyle, the change in the maiden's fortunes. Angus expressed his joy at Annot's good fortune, and said he had no doubt she would convey the whole estate of her grim, fanatical father to some honest fellow who loved the King. 'I should have no objection,' he added, 'to my brother Allan's trying his chance. Annot Lyle could always charm Allan out of his fits of gloom.'

Montrose hastened to inform Angus that the lady, with her father's approval, was almost immediately to be wedded to the Earl of Menteith, and that he himself had come to invite him to the wedding. At this news M'Aulay looked very grave. 'I might have expected,' he said, 'without conceit, to have been consulted. I wish Menteith well; but he has been hasty in this matter.

Allan's feelings towards the young lady were well known, and I cannot see why the strong claim he had upon her gratitude has been set aside without even discussion.'

Montrose entreated M'Aulay to be reasonable. 'Is it probable,' he said, 'that Sir Duncan Campbell would have given his sole heiress to Allan, whose excellent qualities are overshadowed by others that make all tremble who approach him?'

'My lord,' said Angus M'Aulay, 'my brother Allan has faults as well as merits; but he is the best and bravest man of your army, and did not deserve that his happiness should be so little considered by your Excellency and by a young person who owes all to him and his family.'

Montrose endeavoured to make Angus take a different view, but without success. He then assumed a higher tone, and called upon Angus to take care lest his feelings should do harm to his Majesty's service. 'I am particularly anxious,' he said, 'that Allan's present mission, highly honourable to himself, and likely to prove most advantageous to the King's cause, shall not be interrupted. I expect you not to send him any communication on this subject, which might turn his mind from his important mission.'

'My brother knows as well as most men how to deal with his own quarrels,' Angus answered sulkily. 'I shall not interfere. As for his means of obtaining information, it is generally believed he has other sources than those of ordinary messengers. I shall not be surprised if you see him sooner than you expect.'

A more willing guest at the wedding was Sir Dugald Dalgetty, whom Montrose invited. Sir Dugald at once made for the chamber of the bridegroom, who was seeking among his scanty camp-clothes for such articles as would look best upon the approaching occasion.

Sir Dugald entered, and complimented Menteith, with a very grave face, upon his approaching happiness. 'I

am very sorry,' he said, 'I am prevented from witnessing it. In plain truth, I should only disgrace the ceremony, for I have no fitting garments. My clothes are full of rents, and open seams, and tatters at the elbows.'

Menteith, amused by Sir Dugald's solemn complaint, requested him to accept a very handsome dress, which was lying on the floor. Sir Dugald protested, but was at last persuaded to accept the present. The Earl, who had given to Dalgetty the garments he had intended to wear himself, put on a light steel coat, concealed partly by a velvet coat, and partly by a broad blue silk scarf.

Everything was now arranged; and it had been settled that, according to custom, the bride and bridegroom should not meet again until they were before the altar.

The wedding hour had already struck, and Menteith was waiting impatiently in a small room adjoining the chapel for Montrose, who was detained by business concerning the army. The Earl heard the door of the room open, and, supposing Montrose had arrived, said, laughing, 'You are late upon parade.'

'You will find I am too early,' said Allan M'Aulay, who burst into the room. 'Draw, Menteith, and defend yourself like a man, or die like a dog!'

'You are mad, Allan!' answered Menteith, astonished at his sudden appearance and the wild fury of his look. His cheeks were pale—his eyes started from his head—his lips were covered with foam, and his gestures were those of a madman.

'You lie, traitor,' was his frantic reply, 'as you lie in all you have said to me. Your life is a lie!'

'If I did not think you mad,' said Menteith indignantly, 'your life would be brief. How have I deceived you?'

'You told me,' answered M'Aulay, 'that you would not marry Annot Lyle! False traitor! she now awaits you at the altar.'

'It is you who speak falsely,' retorted Menteith. 'I

told you that her obscure birth was the only bar to our union. That is now removed. And whom do you think yourself, that I should give up my claims in your favour ?'

'Draw then,' said M'Aulay ; 'we understand each other.'

'Not now,' said Menteith, 'and not here. Allan, you know me well—wait till to-morrow, and you shall have fighting enough.'

'This hour—this instant—or never,' answered M'Aulay. 'Your triumph shall not go further than this hour. Menteith, I entreat you—draw your sword, and defend your life !' As he spoke he seized the Earl's hand with frantic violence, but Menteith threw him off, exclaiming, 'Begone, madman !'

Thereupon Allan drew his dagger, and struck with all his gigantic force at the Earl's breast. The steel coat turned the point of the weapon upwards, but a deep wound took place between the neck and the shoulder ; and the force of the blow threw the bridegroom to the ground.

At this point Montrose entered on one side of the room. But, almost before he could see what had happened, Allan M'Aulay rushed past him and descended the castle stairs like lightning. 'Guards, shut the gates !' exclaimed Montrose ; 'seize him—kill him, if he resists ! He shall die !'

But Allan, with a second blow of his dagger, laid low a sentinel who was upon duty—crossed the camp like a deer, though pursued by all who caught the alarm—threw himself into the river, and, swimming to the opposite side, was soon lost among the woods. In the course of the same evening his brother Angus and his followers left Montrose's camp, and, taking the road homeward, never again rejoined him.

Nothing certain was ever known of Allan's fate. It is supposed that the boy Kenneth with other Children of the Mist dogged his course, and that he perished by their hands in some obscure wilderness.

Menteith, though severely wounded, and long in a

dangerous state, escaped, thanks to his steel coat, the worst consequences of the blow. It was thought best that he and his intended countess should accompany Sir Duncan to his castle. They performed the journey in safety, and Menteith was in a few weeks so well in health as to be united to Annot in the castle of her father.

Menteith did not recover sufficiently to join Montrose during his brief and glorious career. After the restoration of the King to the throne he occupied a situation in the land suitable to his rank, lived long, happy in the public respect and affection of his family, and died at a good old age.

Sir Dugald Dalgetty continued to perform his military duties until he was made prisoner. He was condemned to death, but several officers in the service of the Parliament proposed that his life should be spared, as, if he would change his service, his skill would be useful in their army. But Dalgetty proved obstinate. 'I engaged to serve the King for a certain period,' he said, 'and till that period is over, I will not change sides.' He was in danger of losing his head, but his friends fortunately discovered that only a fortnight of his engagement to the King still remained. Sentence on Sir Dugald was therefore suspended for a fortnight: at the end of that time he was perfectly willing to engage for service with the Parliament.

Nothing further is known of his history, until he obtained his family estate of Drumthwacket, not by the sword, but by marriage with an elderly widow.

He was remembered as wandering about the country, very old, very deaf, and very full of endless stories about the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North.

PRINTED FROM PLATES AT THE DIOCESAN PRESS, MADRAS, 1923